

FOUR FEET
ON A FENDER



EDWARD LEIGH PELL



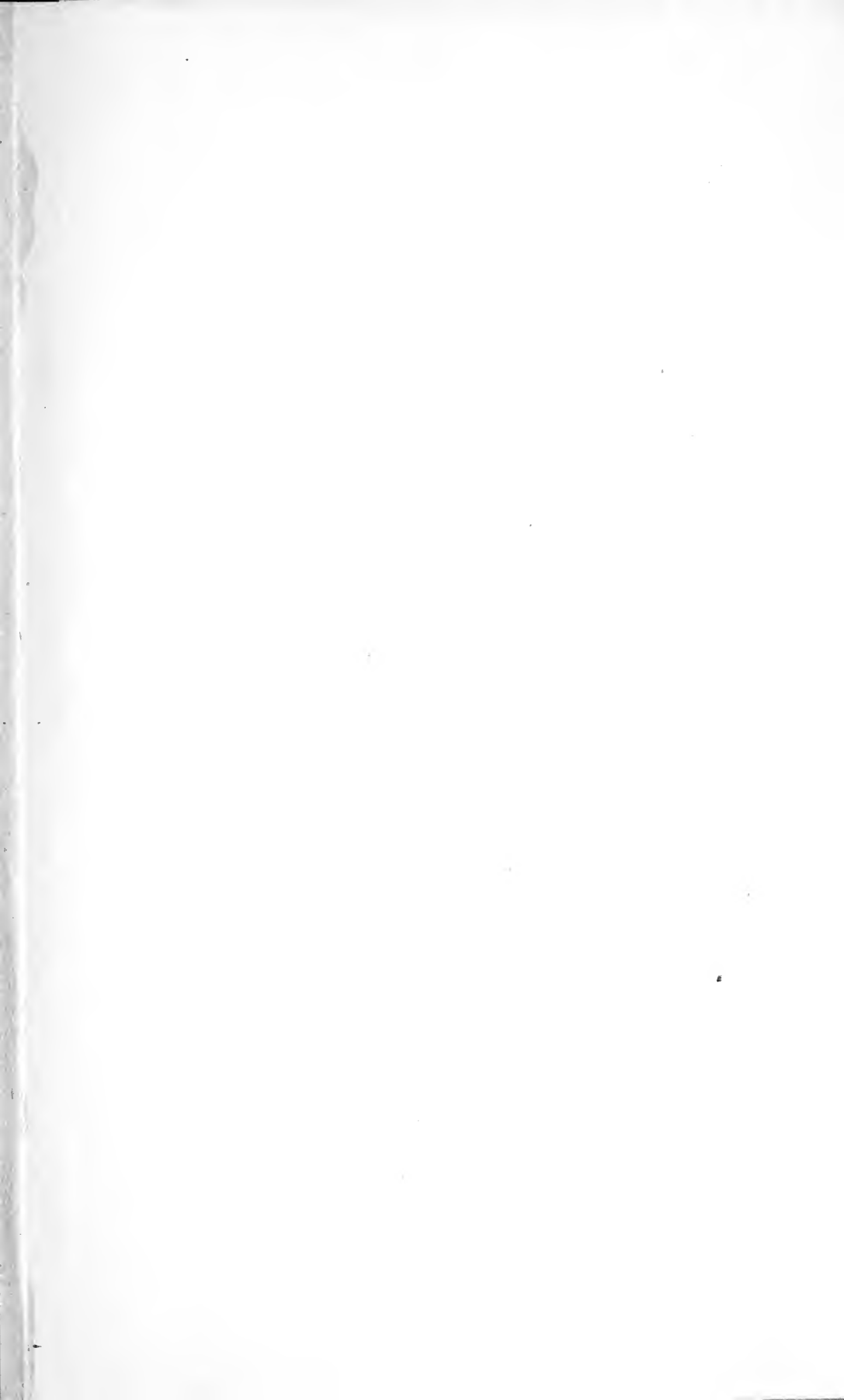
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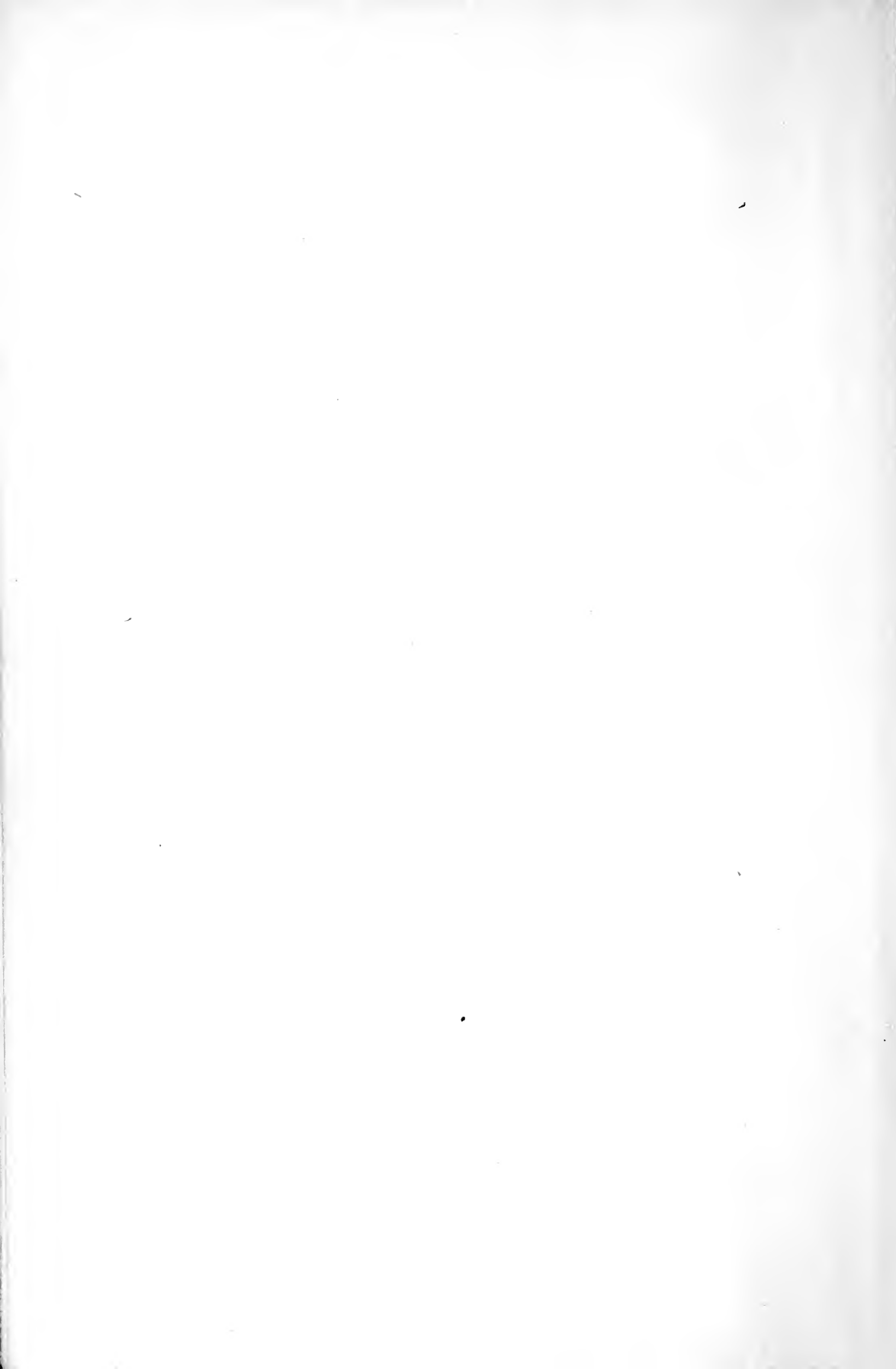
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FOUR FEET ON A FENDER



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Quiet Hour Talks With Women

BY
EDWARD LEIGH PELL



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I

WHEN LIFE IS WORTH WHILE

WAS it Oliver Wendell Holmes? My memory is bad, but it must have been Holmes: it would not fit anybody else in the world. No doubt you have heard the story. You remember he was the cheeriest of all our philosophers until one day when he had reached what to ordinary men would have been old age, the wife of his youth was taken from him, and then the light in his heart flickered and nearly went out. Not very long afterwards a friend who was visiting him banteringly questioned whether he could express his idea of happiness in five words. The old man was silent for a moment and then a far away look came into his eyes and he said softly:

"Four feet on a fender."

When I was a child I had a friend whom I can never forget. She was the Quiet Lady who lived across the street. I think of her still as the Quiet Lady. She was one of those women whose lot in life is to bear many burdens with little aid from the inspiration of human friendships; yet her face was the most perfect picture of peace and contentment I have ever known. It used to make me feel that she had just been talking to the angels. I would go over to see her every day and I knew her ways. Every morning, when the rush of household cares was over, she would take her Bible into the quiet parlor and lock the door. I often wondered what she did, for not a sound would come from the room for half an hour. Then I would hear the click of the lock, and the door would open; and though I was but a little child, I must have seen the glimmer of a new light in her face, for I felt that something had happened. I did not understand it then, but it was something like—

Four feet on a fender.

Have you ever seen a father and a son who

were chums? I hope you have, though it is one of the rarest as it is one of the most beautiful sights in all the world. I knew a father whose son was his chum almost from infancy. They were so often seen together that people called the boy his father's shadow. But he was more than that; he was his very substance. The storms of life had striven hard with the man, and he was almost as bare as the trees that have been whipped of their autumn leaves, but he still felt rich in the possession of his son. When the boy was a little fellow he would go and kneel down at his father's side at family worship, and the father would lay his hand on his head; and when he was full six feet tall, he continued to go and kneel at his father's side, and the father would place his hand on his head. By and by he was taken away, and as he went something snapped, and the father's light went out. But one day as the broken-hearted man stretched out his hands in the dark for his son, there came to him a wonderful sense of the nearness of the Unseen, and he began to think of his boy and of his own Heavenly Father as separated from him only by a thin veil. And

he talked with the Father about his boy. Every day he talked with him and at last one day the sense of companionship with his son came back to him and with it a deeper sense of companionship with his Father than he had ever felt before. Then life became worth while again—doubly worth while; for from that day the father sought not only to do his own work for God but also to fill his boy's place and do the work which he felt his boy would have done for God if he had been permitted to remain in the world.

I know a woman who has never found life worth while. She says she is living only for the sake of her children, but I suppose that is a mere habit of speech with her, as it is with many other women. Probably, if she should take the time to think it through, she would conclude that she does not know why she is living. She is not anxious to die, but she wakes up every morning tired of life. There's a dull headache and a bad taste in the mouth, and a weariness in her heart, and she is sorry another day has come. She does not want to get up, but she gets up because she must. And

that means that she always drags herself up. Her soul does not know what it is to mount like a lark to the sky. And so instead of beginning the day with a song she begins with a sigh—the sigh of a driven slave. She has no appetite for breakfast, but she eats because she must. She cannot bring herself to feel an interest in her household duties, but she goads herself through them because she must. She is a poor slave driven by a hard master, and the master's name is Must. When she is through with the drudgery, she goes out, because she must, and joins in the world's mad pursuit, pushing her way for the rest of the day through a tangled mass of dressmakers' engagements, milliners' openings, crowds, crushes, luncheons, calls, society meetings, club meetings, and what not. All because she must. Then she hurries back home, every nerve quivering, every muscle in her body "dead tired," her poor brain addled, to find everything gone wrong, including of course the cook. Then there's supper and somewhere to go after supper until bedtime.

All because she must.

She never rests. She says she is too nervous to rest, which of course only means that she is too nervous to lie down. She does not know that her trouble is deeper than her nerves—that she is wearied in body because she is sick and tired of life, and that she is sick and tired of life because she has not found life worth while, and that she has not found her life worth while because she has tried to live her life alone.

For the poor woman hasn't a companion in the world. Her home is full of loved ones, but no companions. Once she had one; it is like a dream now, it is so long ago; but Must, the cruel master, broke up the quiet moments they were having together, and to-day he is only a prosy provider, and she is so far away that, if he should mention "four feet on a fender," she would laugh a hollow laugh at his "foolishness." There is a sweet spirit in her daughter inviting companionship, but she has had to decline the invitation with regrets, as she has declined many another—on account of a previous engagement. She cannot remember that she ever sat alone with Beatrice and kept still

long enough for the two spirits to touch each other and commune silently together. Beatrice is not her chum; she is her care—her grinding, wearing, maddening care. Beatrice must come out next winter, and Beatrice must have this and that and the other, including a Man, and a beautiful home of her own and—O dear! there's no end to it.

No, Beatrice is not her chum. She has no chums. Out in the world she has admirers and wellwishers more than she can count, and she calls them friends for convenience' sake. There's nothing else to call them. She has society friends and church friends and professional friends—for her husband's sake—and “summer friends,” and several other varieties; but not a single true friend—not a single soul that she could place her own soul up against and rest. Also all through the day, all through the passing years, there has been One ever at her hand, ever ready to speak with her whenever she should care to speak with him—One whose companionship for ten short minutes would do more to soothe that aching brow and smooth out the crows' feet from around those

eyes and quiet those quivering nerves and satisfy the fearful thirst of her soul than all the friends in the world. And she has declined his invitation also, just as she has declined Beatrice's—with regret, on account of a previous engagement. And as he is not her care—like Beatrice—she has not given him a single thought. She says her prayers when she gets up, because she must, but she does not think of him. She is in a hurry, and she is thinking of something else.

And so with loved ones around her, and admirers and wellwishers without number, and the Burden Bearer, blessed Friend of tired humanity, at her side, the poor woman drags her weary way through the world as a thirsty beast of burden stumbles through the desert, perishing for want of companionship as the poor beast is perishing for want of water.

And she wonders why God ever started her across such a desert.

God has given us a good many things to make life worth while, but here is one thing without which life is not worth while, whatever else one may have. This world was not

made on the one-man plan. No man liveth unto himself; no man *can* live unto himself. And man means woman as well as the other sort. Put a man in a dungeon and he quickly realizes that he must have companionship, else he will either die or go mad. If he knows God, if he comes into a sense of companionship with God, he can live without any other companion. If he does not know God, he will seize upon any living thing in his cell and hug it to his bosom. He will hold his breath and listen. If he hears a mouse, joy will spring up in his heart. He will make a companion of the mouse. If no living thing is near, he will try to create an imaginary companion, as children often do. If he fails at that, there is no hope; he will die or go raving mad. An animal may exist without companionship. The animal in a man may exist without companionship. But no man can live without it. No woman really lives who is not living close up to something that responds to her own heart beat.

Life *is* companionship. Eternal life is eternal companionship. "This is life eternal that

they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.”

And life broadens and deepens and grows more precious, more worth while, just in proportion as our sense of companionship broadens and deepens and grows more precious, more worth while. If I cultivate only human friendships, life may be worth while to-day, and it may be worth nothing to-morrow. If I cultivate the friendship of Him who can get closer to my spirit than any human being and can *stay there forever*, he will make my life as rich as the blessing of heaven. And it will be worth while even if I am denied all human companionship. The storms of life may sweep all my loved ones and friends beyond my sight, but I shall still have strength, for when I sit in the twilight stillness before my fire there will still be—

Four feet on the fender.

My mother was a clinging, tender soul, and she leaned upon my father, and he put his great, strong arm about her and shielded her as few women had ever been shielded. When he was taken away, the tender vine was almost torn up by its roots, and for a time life had no more

meaning. But by and by, when she turned away from her own grief and put her arms around her little children and cried out of the depths unto God for them, there came to her a wonderful sense of the nearness of Him who had promised to be a husband to the widow, and she found such strength in communion with him that she was able to rise to her feet and stand erect and face the world without a flicker in her beautiful eyes. And in this strength and almost without human resource she fed and clothed her six children, sent them to school, sent them to college, ministered to the needy, cooled fevered brows, bathed the temples of the faint, refreshed the weary, and made the most of each golden moment as the priceless gift of God's love. And through it all she was never so busy that she could not find the time each day to go apart and rest awhile in companionship with Him who was her only refuge and her strength. And to the day of her death, through a widowhood of forty years, she was never alone. Dark days there were in plenty and there were times when the fire burnt low on the hearth, but I don't believe there was ever

a time when she did not feel—certainly never
a time when she did not believe—that there
were—

Four feet on the fender.

II

THE SECRET OF TRUSTING

ONE golden summer day a man sat upon a hillside feasting his eyes upon a glorious scene that spread out before him. It was in the freshness of early morning, and the air was balmy and mellow, and the sunbeams danced like fairies upon the dewdrops on the grass. The sky was as blue as a baby's eyes, and the fields as far as the eye could reach were carpeted with beautiful flowers, white and purple and crimson and gold, and through the heavens darted here and there happy birds, leaving the echoes of sweet music behind them.

Presently the man turned and looked into the faces of a group of friends who had gathered around him, and his heart filled up with pity. Never before had he seen a contrast so strange and painful. In the outstretched landscape he had seen beauty, peace, joy, contentment; but the faces before him were seamed with anxiety

and care, and the eyes that should have reflected the calm of heaven were filled with pitiful yearning and vague foreboding.

“Dear friends,” said the man, “why are your hearts so troubled? Why do you consume your souls with anxious care? Look at those birds. Do they fly as if they carried a burden on their hearts? Listen to their music. Do you hear one anxious note? Do they wear out their lives with fear for the morrow? They do not even toil for a living, and yet your Father feedeth them. If God cares for the birds that do not toil, will he not care for his own children that labor so hard for their daily bread? And those beautiful lilies yonder: think of them. Do they go with bowed heads all the day, eating their hearts out with anxiety for to-morrow? They do not even spin a thread for themselves, and yet—look at them. Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these simple little flowers. If your Father clothes the lilies which are only here for a few days, and which never do anything but hold up their heads to the Father’s sunshine and the Father’s refreshing dew, will he not much more clothe you, his

children, whose hands are weary with spinning? O friends, why are you so anxious? Why is it that you cannot believe in God?"

Who is this stranger with the peaceful face speaking with such beautiful confidence of the Father's loving care? I heard a saintly old man talk that way once—not so beautifully indeed, but with perfect sincerity—and when the sermon was over, a cynical neighbor said: "It is very easy for that old man to talk that way, for he has enough government bonds laid away to last him a lifetime."

But this Stranger had no bonds. He did not have a penny. He did not have a place of his own to lay his head. The very clothes he wore were the gifts of friends. And, although he had divine power to provide for others, he had denied himself the privilege of using it for himself that he might take his place with us and be as dependent as we are upon the Father's care.

It is said that Jesus knew all men and needed not that any one should tell him what was in man; but there was one thing in the human heart for which he seems never to have been

quite prepared, and that was anxiety. For anxiety means that we do not believe in the Father, and that was something as strange to him as my failure to believe in you would be to your child. Knowing the Father as he did, the fears of men shocked him. They seemed to him utterly against nature. How could any sane being doubt the Father? It was as if he had happened upon a little band of wandering children who doubted their own mothers. It was the only question he seemed bound to ask. "Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?"

I once knew a home—no, it was not a home; it was a purgatory—in which the children had no faith in their parents. To me it was utterly inexplicable. How could a child doubt his own father and mother? I was but a child myself; and when I heard one day that the big sixteen-year-old boy in that purgatory had actually doubled up his fist and struck his mother a stinging blow, I felt—but there are no words to tell what I felt. I think Jesus—the human Jesus—must have had something of the same

feeling when he looked upon men and women who did not believe in their Father.

If you have ever seen a home wrecked like that, you know there is but one thing that will bring order out of such chaos. You might fill it with music and flowers and singing birds and gay and clever friends and all the beautiful things which proud mortals use to hide their family skeletons; and unless faith came back into the hearts of the children, it would still be so hideous a place that you could not pass it without a shudder. For the world has never yet found a substitute for faith. We are given to saying that love is the greatest thing in the world, and that saying is true; but the most necessary thing in the world—the thing without which love cannot exist—is faith; and without faith, whatever else one may have—above all, whatever else a wife, a mother, may have—life is not worth while.

If I could condense the wisdom and experience of all the ages into one word of advice to women, I think that word would be: "Whatever may happen, hold on to your faith in God and man; for to cease to trust is to cease to live."

You have often noticed that wars and divorces and all like tragedies are nearly always preceded by a period of "strained relations." During this period the parties to the quarrel get so far apart that they become practically strangers. When this point has been reached, we know that reconciliation is hopeless unless they can be brought together face to face. For it is impossible for two nations or two persons to understand each other so long as they stand aloof the one from the other; and, unless they do understand each other, they can never trust each other. That is why no wise woman ever undertakes to settle the differences between an estranged couple by acting as a go-between. She knows that they are already too far apart to understand each other and that the only thing to do is to bring them together face to face as quickly as possible under circumstances that will cause them to open their hearts to each other. For what estranged persons need is simply what strangers need. They need to know each other. And so the wise woman, instead of talking matters over now with one and now with the other, manages to get them

both out for a drive with her, and perhaps drives around through the cemetery and leaves them for a little while alone at the grave of their firstborn child. And standing there each looks into the other's heart and finds that, after all, there were no differences to settle; they only needed to know each other.

Often during the Civil War the pickets on each side lay in the tall grass but a few rods apart; and now and then a "Yank," hungry for tobacco, or a "Johnny Reb," thirsty for coffee, would lift his handkerchief on his bayonet above his head as a flag of truce, and the picket opposite would respond, and in another moment they would be lying side by side on the line swapping tobacco and coffee and war stories; and after a time each would crawl back to his side wondering what in the world they were fighting for. For in those short fifteen minutes they would learn each other and discover what the North and the South had long before forgotten, that they were brothers, and that as brothers they could trust each other. Can you imagine that if all the soldiers on both sides had come together on the line and swapped

tobacco and coffee and war stories and opened their hearts the one to the other—can you imagine that there would have been any more fighting?

And what does all this mean? Simply this, that if we want to hold on to our faith in God and man and make our lives worth while we must know them better. This is the teaching of experience, and it is the teaching of the Book. "For faith," says the Book, "cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." If we will get close to men and listen to the word that comes from their hearts, we shall, as a rule, learn to trust them; and if we will get close to the Father and listen to his word as we read his book and as we talk with him in prayer, and as we seek to do his will, we shall learn to trust him.

I know there are pious folk who still contend that faith is ours for the asking, but it is not true. If we shun God and make no effort to get acquainted with him, we may ask him to send us faith until doomsday and we shall never get it, any more than we shall get bread if we refuse to sow the seed the Father

gives us and wait for him to send us ready-baked loaves.

A year ago a stranger moved next door. You did not like her looks and you found yourself regarding her with misgiving. You felt that you would never believe in her. To-day you believe in her as you believe in your own mother. What wrought the wonderful change? Did you go to see her three months after she came and tell her that for some unaccountable reason you did not have confidence in her and beg her to help you to trust her? And then did you stay away and wait for her to do something that would give you confidence in her? You would not treat a neighbor that way. You have never treated any one but God that way. You believe in your neighbor to-day because you cultivated her acquaintance. That is the only reason.

And if you ever believe in God it will be for the same reason.

Is it not strange that although our Father has been next door to us all these years and has done so many things to help us find him out—has given us a Book that lets us into the

secrets of his great heart and never lets a day pass without doing something to show his love for us,—is it not strange that so many of us should have the effrontery to send him word from day to day that we are still doubting him and to please do something that will help us to believe in him?

III

BLOOD KIN TO EVERYBODY

PERHAPS you know how it is. When troubles come they come in troops. And troubles had come to my friend in troops—almost in battalions. I have seen a tree suddenly set upon by a savage wind and whipped of its autumn leaves until it looked like the upstretched hand of a skeleton. My friend looked like that. I was saying this, and more, to Miss Prim, an acquaintance of mine. Not a friend, but an acquaintance. Everybody calls her Miss Prim. You would no more think of saying Lucille than you would think of calling an iceberg dearie. She listened in a bored way for a moment and then interrupted me.

“Why should you be so concerned about it?” she asked. “He is nothing to you.”

“But he is my friend,” I replied.

“But suppose he is; you can’t afford to bother yourself with other people’s troubles.”

You may imagine that Miss Prim is only a thoughtless young thing who doesn't know half the time what she is saying. But it was not a thoughtless speech; as I found out afterwards, it was her philosophy of life. In the depths of her heart, or in whatever depths she has, she sincerely believes that one should mind one's own troubles as well as one's own business and let other people's alone.

It is not altogether Miss Prim's fault. When she was a mere tot, her mother took her children across the water to educate them. They went to school a little while in England and a little while in France and a little while in Germany and several little whiles in divers and sundry places, and they never stayed long enough in one place to become interested in anybody but themselves. They saw people and they met people, but they never knew anybody. And when they came back to America, they lived a little while here and a little while there, and then they grew restless and packed up and went to Europe again. And they have been on the go ever since. If you should ask Miss Prim where she came from, she would say London

or Berlin or New York, as the mood took her; and if you wanted to know her country, she would say: "Well, I suppose I should say America, of course, but really it makes no difference."

And it really doesn't make any difference, for she has no more sense of patriotism in her soul than a pine cone. She is a woman without a country and without a people.

Life has never been a problem to Miss Prim, for the simple reason that she does not live. She rises at a decent hour, eats three meals during the day, looks after her clothes, keeps a new book on hand, and occasionally a new bit of fancywork, takes long walks, shops, meets people, sees a new play, goes to bed at a decent hour, and sleeps well on what she calls a comfortable conscience. That, she tells me, is her strong point: she is sure no woman ever had a more comfortable conscience to sleep on. I don't think she has ever discovered her conscience: it's something else. But whatever it is she takes care of it. For she must be comfortable: comfort is her existence. When she picks up the morning paper she holds her eyes

fast to pleasant things and carefully avoids all headlines that might stir her sympathies. When she goes on the street she never sees a sign of poverty or suffering or need of any sort. She has trained herself so well that if some poor devil should fall dead at her feet she could make her way around him and go on as coolly as if he were a fallen post. And when it comes to conversation—well, no diplomat ever understood so well the art of evading a disagreeable subject. Whatever happens, she must avoid the disagreeable. The disagreeable is none of her affair and she must live her own life. Her sensibilities must not be disturbed.

And as she never hears a cry of need, she never answers, and so nothing ever takes her out of her way. Nothing is to be done except what was done yesterday. If the recording angel writes up the deeds done in the body, there must be a very long white space beneath the name of Miss Lucille Prim, for I have never known her to do anything, either good or bad. She simply draws her monthly stipend and takes the days as they come. And of course she has not found life worth while; she has sim-

ply found that it is not worth while not to exist.

What is the secret of this woman's failure? You have already guessed it: she has failed simply for want of a sense of kinship. In her childhood her environment was such that she could hardly have been expected to discover her kinship with either God or humanity. She had a prayer book and went to church, but she remained as ignorant of both as a kitten. The idea that God was her Father never found its way into her mind. She never became conscious of any tie binding her to God. She never became conscious of God. And she never laid her heart up against the great heart of humanity and heard them beat in unison and discovered that they were one. She thought of herself as a unit, complete in itself, with no cords running out from her heart except those which tied her to her mother, sisters and brothers, and she looked on the passing throng merely as a passing show. And so, never having discovered her kinship with humanity, she has never taken her place in the throng. She has never admitted, never even imagined, that

she and the throng had anything in common. In all her life she has never recognized a human form lying in the dust as a brother or sister, nor has she ever heard anything in a cry of need from human lips that sounded like the voice of a kinsman. Nor has she ever thought of listening for the voice of the Father above. Having no sense of kinship, she has pursued her way in the world as one deaf and blind, and naturally she has never found her place in life, and therefore she has never found life worth while.

You cannot live without a sense of kinship. Leave a man on an uninhabited island, and a day will not pass before he will realize that he must have something more than food to sustain life; he must have something that he can claim kinship with. And he will search every nook and corner of that island for that something. If he can find nothing but a cold-blooded snake, he will find comfort in the snake. He will feed it and watch it for hours as it lies in the sand before his hut. He will talk to it and call it Jim. And the snake will become attached to him, and he will think of Jim al-

most as his child. If he can find nothing, and if he has no consciousness of the presence of the Unseen, he will throw up his hands, and you know what the end will be. And it will come quickly.

Trying to live *unto* one's self turns one inward to live *on* one's self. It is like sucking one's own blood. . . .

The fire has been full of beautiful visions for me to-day. I wish you could see the beautiful face that I saw a moment ago in those coals just over there. Ah! there it is again. I have rarely seen such marvelous sweetness. It is the face of a woman who attained to a life of wonderful richness and beauty. I knew her years ago. She was not the kind of woman one usually thinks of when we speak of a beautiful soul—not a recluse, not an invalid who had become beautiful because her face had become so transparent that her glorious soul could not help shining through it. She lived in the world, just as you and I live in it. She had her place in the throng and she kept it. But the smell of the world was not on her garments. She

had money, but her money had always found its way outward, never inward. It had never reached her soul; it had never soiled her finger tips; it was as if she had handled it all her life with rubber gloves. All the town bowed before her, but the worship of men, women, and little children was to her only as the love of her own family. It had never taken anything from her sweet simplicity, her beautiful humility, her transparent purity of soul. Her life was full, but never overcrowded. She was never too nervous to rest. She never pushed herself through crushes. She never joined in the world's mad pursuit. She never chased a fad, never went distracted over a new movement. She never spent a moment in that most desperate, most unreasonable, most agonizing of all womanly avocations—social climbing. She didn't have to, it is true, but she wouldn't have done it whatever her circumstances might have been. Her face was so serene and her ways so quiet that you would have wondered, if you had met her, whether she ever did anything that the world would count. Yet I do not think that I ever met her when her heart was not in a

flame. It was a steady flame, as steady as her soulful eyes that looked straight into yours and never flickered. And she always had something to do that was worth while. There were the children of the mill to look after. There were fifty tots in her Sunday-school class that were ever on her heart. There were poor neighbors to feed. There were Bible women in heathen lands to take care of. There was a young man who had gone to drinking, and who needed an outstretched hand. There was a grief-stricken poor woman in the lane who needed comforting. There were fevered brows to be bathed; there were throbbing temples to be soothed; there were prodigals to be stopped in the way and led back to the Father.

And she was always doing the things that needed to be done.

She is doing them yet. I have not seen her in a long while, but I know she is doing them yet. If you should ask her to-day for the secret of her life, she could not tell you. But I can tell you, and I can tell you in a word. She has a sense of kinship as wide as the world. Her heart is tied to the Father and

to all his children. She has never cut a cord that ties her to humanity. She feels that she is kin—really kin—blood kin—to every human being, and she knows she is kin to God. She has learned of him in his Word and talked with him in prayer and sat with her feet on the fender and looked into the fire and dreamed of him until she has become as conscious of the tie that binds her to him as she is of the tie that binds her to her husband. And because her heart goes out toward the Father, she is always doing something that he wants done; and because her heart goes out toward his children—because she feels that his children are her kin—her blood kin—she is always doing something for them. She is not trying to help the world to be better; she is only trying to help her kin. And that gives to her life a particular meaning and a particular use. And that makes her life worth while to herself.

And it makes it worth while to others.

IV

THE ART OF BEING A CHRISTIAN

AND so you too know what it means to be hungry for God. You know the loneliness and weariness and humiliation of wandering about in God's world as one of his nominal children and all the while realizing that you are hardly on speaking terms with him. You know what it is to start out in Christ's name and find no power to follow in his steps. And you know the emptiness——

No; don't say that. Your life is not as empty as that. It cannot be as empty as that, for you are determined, and a determined woman's life you know is never empty. Only yesterday you were saying that you were tired of being a Christian in name only—tired of carrying Christ's flag and never winning a victory—and that you were resolved to be a real Christian if it cost you everything you had. Up to that point your life may indeed have been empty, but

the moment you determined to be a real Christian it began to fill up. You may be sure of that. And, believe me, it is going to keep on filling up; for you are going to be the Christian that you are determined to be.

How do I know? Because in the life of the spirit we can all be just what we are determined to be.

Yes, I mean it. I am not seeing visions in the coals now: it is a plain matter of fact and as true as a sum in arithmetic. In the physical world we may determine and fail in spite of our strength; but in the spiritual world we may determine and succeed in spite of our weakness. We can be just what we are determined to be. Mind you, I do not say that you are going to be what you would like to be; that is a very different matter. Only yesterday a friend of mine told me that all her life she had longed to be a Christian and she could never understand why she had made no progress. It seemed to her that her earnest longing should have accomplished something. That is the trouble with many sincere people who are hanging around the threshold of the Christian

life: they begin and end with longing. I once knew a woman who longed to be a Christian for seventy years and then died outside the threshold. Longing never takes you a step upward. It may take you downward, but not upward. As Marie used to say—

But I have never told you about Marie. An old friend of mine once said that Marie was the most charming volume of the evidences of Christianity he had ever read—and the most convincing. No man could look into her beautiful face and argue against Christ; he was there; you could see him in her eyes.

Marie used to say that the reason so many nominal Christians never become real Christians is not that they don't long to be Christians, but that there is a high step between longing and the threshold of the Christian life—the step of determination—and the average man or woman seldom has the will to take it. God may fill us with longing to enter into the Christian life, but he is not going to take us up in his arms by force and carry us into it. He would no more try to force us into loving communion with himself than a mother

would try to force her child into loving communion with herself. Forced communion is an absurdity. A child must step up to the threshold of his mother's heart of his own will. So if we would live the Christian life we must step up to the threshold of our own free will. That is what you did when you determined to be a real Christian regardless of the cost: you took the high step that brought you to the threshold. And now the way is clear before you. You do not need to wait for anything. You do not even need to wait for God. God has been waiting for you all these years and he is standing ready to go with you. You need not give yourself a moment's uneasiness about him: he will look after his part: you only need to be concerned about your part. Why not begin to do your part to-day? If you want to learn the art of becoming a Christian——

Yes, I mean *art*. I know the word has an unorthodox sound, but that does not matter; sound is no test of orthodoxy any more than it is of piety. Of course being a Christian is something more than an art—ininitely more—but there is art in it. There is——

But I see you are knitting your brows again. You are thinking that I have contradicted myself. Yes, I remember I was talking the other day about my beautiful spring and I said that it was the living image of a Christian; and you would like to know if a beautiful spring, of all things, is not above all art. That depends. It may be true of springs in general, but it is not true of my spring in particular. If my spring was nothing but a fountain of water, certainly there would be no art in it; but if you should sit by it alone as I have done until the fountain disappeared and you saw in its place a calm, sweet face looking up into yours and seeking fellowship with your spirit, I think you would agree with me that it has at least mastered one art—the art of living. Did you ever know a man or woman who better understood how to keep the channels of the heart open to the stream of life, how to keep the spirit calm and sweet, how to keep the face upturned to heaven, how to look pleasant, how to be kind to everybody, how to give a cup of cold water in the name of Christ to friends and foes alike without spilling it on them? Yes, there is art

even in being a Christian. No art can give us physical life, but if we want to live, really live, we must learn the art of living. So no art can give us spiritual life—Christ alone can give us that—but if we want to live, really *live* the Christian life, we must learn the art of Christian living.

I know how you feel about it. I remember we were talking the other day about dear old Wilmer and you remarked that while you did not know him very well you had long envied him for his religion, which always seemed to you to run itself. But there are no automatic Christians any more than there are automatic artists, and if you should come to know my old friend as well as I do, you would find that he is as diligent in practicing the art of being a Christian as your musical neighbor is in practicing on her piano. There is no life, however simple it may be, that runs itself. If we are going to live, we must have a hand in our lives. It may be a very simple part, but we must do our part. I cannot paint my own portrait, but I must have a hand in it to the extent of sitting for it, and sitting for one's portrait, as

every one who has tried it knows, is an art. So I cannot transform myself into the image of Christ, but I must have a hand in it to the extent of "sitting" for the transformation, and this, as every one who has tried it—really tried it—knows, is an art—the simplest, it may be, yet the greatest of all the arts.

Do I mean to put religion on a level with music or painting? No; nevertheless, they have points of resemblance. For example, religion—the Christian religion—is like music or painting in that, however hard you may work, you can never master the art unless you have something in your soul. To be a musician you must have a musician in your soul, and to be a Christian you must have Christ in your soul. But over against this resemblance you must note this great difference: if you want to master music you must have genius or talent to begin with, while if you want to learn the art of Christian living you only need tremendous earnestness to begin with. You may have enough earnestness to keep you practicing on your piano six hours a day—like your neighbor—and you may never become a pianist. No

amount of earnestness can draw down from heaven the gift of genius. But if you are tremendously in earnest about being a Christian—in earnest enough to keep in earnest—you are going to be a Christian; for such earnestness is a prayer tugging ceaselessly at the heart of God. And such earnestness *does* draw down from heaven the gift of heavenly wisdom. And with this gift the most illiterate man or woman may learn the art of Christian living. I saw another face in the coals just then. It was the seamy old face of a cobbler I once knew. When that old man became a Christian he didn't know a letter of the alphabet, but before the week was over he was spelling his way through his Bible and in less than two years he became famous as a refreshing fountain of heavenly wisdom to which thirsty souls in the neighborhood were ever running for drink. I never knew a wiser counselor. It seems to me that the windows of heaven that were intended to open above the college nearby all opened just over the old cobbler's shop; at any rate, I knew more than one professor who always sneaked around to the little shop to have his shoes

mended whenever he found himself in a fog over life's problems. God loves to pour down wisdom upon the heads of earnest people. . . .

I wish we would learn to think of life as Jesus thought of it. When we talk about life we may mean any one of several different things. When Jesus talked about life he never meant but one thing. To his mind there was but one life—the life which we live when we live with God, the only true source of life. He never thought of men who existed only physically and intellectually as being alive: men separated from God were separated from the source of life and were therefore dead. They might exist as animals, but they did not live as men. Life was too great a thing, too sacred a thing with him to be confounded with mere existence. Life was something going out from God into every channel of man's being—not only into the arteries and nerves of his body, but into all the channels of his soul. It was this life that Jesus came to impart to men and women, and it is the living of this life that

constitutes his religion—the Christian religion. If this——

Yes, you have anticipated my point. If religion is life, then the art of Christian living is simply the art of living, in the highest sense of the term. A Christian is not one who has given up life, not a peculiar being living a narrow, one-sided life, but one who has opened up all the channels of his being to life and has become fully alive. A Christian woman does not have less life than other women, but more. She has not cut herself off from life; on the contrary, she has come into vital union with the only true Source of Life, and life is ceaselessly pouring into her being, and she is every day becoming more and more alive and living a wider and fuller and more abundant life.

But you want to know what constitutes the art of living in its highest sense. Let me see if I can make it plain. I know a young man who has mastered the art of physical living. And, by the way, he is a magnificent looking fellow. I have rarely seen such a splendid bundle of physical life. What has he been doing? He has not tried to produce life—nobody outside

of a laboratory ever attempted that sort of thing;—he has simply aimed to open up every part of his body to life. All that he has done for his body has been with a view to giving life a full chance in every muscle, every artery, every nerve, every pore, every particle of his physical being. That is the meaning of all his exercises, his baths, his dieting, his tests—everything. The art of physical living consists in doing certain things to keep every part of the physical being open to life—to give life a full chance in the body. The art of intellectual living, as you know, is of the same character. You have mastered that art, and everything you do for your mind is with a view to opening up your intellectual being more and more fully to life. Now the art of living in the highest sense consists primarily in doing for the higher or spiritual nature what you are accustomed to do for your mind and what that young man has been doing for his body: its aim is to open up every part of the spiritual being to life—to the Spirit of Christ who is our life.

But my young friend has discovered that his body and mind are so intimately connected that

one affects the other, and so he not only keeps his body open to life, but he tries to keep his mind open to life also, that the health and vigor of the one may add to the health and vigor of the other. And you have made the same discovery and you insist that if life is to have a full chance in your mind you must give it a full chance in your body also. So the Christian has discovered that the body and mind are intimately connected with the soul, and while he is interested primarily in his spiritual nature he realizes that he must not only do what he can to keep his spiritual nature open to Christ, but he must keep his body and mind at his disposal also. Thus the art of Christian living—that is, living in the highest, fullest sense—consists in handling ourselves in such a way that Christ, our life, may have a full chance in every part of our being.

But how should one begin to learn the art of Christian living? Suppose you should ask a bird how he learned to sing—what do you think he would say? I think he would say: “The best way to begin is to begin. That was

my way." I am sure he would say it, for that is the way everybody begins who does anything worth while—that is, everybody except people. What queer creatures we humans are! A little bird just plunges in anywhere and soon beats us singing. A little ant just takes hold anywhere and soon beats us working. But we humans—we spend so much time trying to decide how to begin that there is no time left to begin. Why can't we just begin? Why not begin the art of Christian living by just beginning?

Is that all? No; but our fire is getting low and it is time to light the lamps.

V

GIVING CHRIST A CHANCE IN OUR LIVES

WHEN I asked why we cannot begin the art of Christian living by just beginning, just as a bird begins to learn to sing simply by beginning, I only meant to say that the right way to make a beginning in the Christian life is the way we make a beginning in anything else, and that is the natural way. To Jesus the spiritual was as natural as the material. His Heavenly Father was as natural as his earthly mother and religion was as natural as breathing. And if we want to be drawn to the things of the spirit we must learn to think of them in the same way. We must think of the land of the spirit not as a far-off ghostly land, but as a real, though invisible, land in which we may walk here and now just as we walk in the sweet fields in the cool of the evening. The spiritual life is not a mysterious *unhuman* existence; it is not something differ-

ent from life; it is the perfection of life. A Christian woman is not an eccentric exile from humanity, as so many people imagine; she is simply a normal woman who has opened up her whole being to the Eternal Fountain of Life and is living life at its full.

How wonderfully this idea of the naturalness of the Christian life smooths the way for us when we turn our backs upon nominal Christianity and start out to be Christians indeed! The woman who imagines that if she wants to be a real Christian she must cut out her life after a mysterious pattern never succeeds in cutting out her life at all. She doesn't know her pattern and she can make nothing but blunders. And what pitiful blunders they are! Now you can steer clear of these blunders, and you will steer clear of them if you will only remember that the life which you are to live is not an imitation life or an artificial life, but the life of Christ. If you will put yourself in Christ's hands that he may live in you, and if you will follow the promptings of his Spirit, you will find yourself living as simply and naturally as he lived.

Nature is not a criminal; she is God's child, and we must not imagine that the more unnatural we make our religious life the more Christ-like we will be. On the contrary, we must conform to nature more. Not to sin, not to our sinful natures, but to nature—to nature as it comes from the hand of God. The hypocritical rabbis were unnatural. They make you think of horribly deformed children. Jesus was natural. He makes you think of the lilies of the field. . . .

Ah! you did not get that last sentence. Well, no matter; doubtless you were thinking of something better. What? Listening to the silence? Well, that *is* better. I am glad you have an ear for the silence: it is wonderful music. Some people know only the stillness that is as a vacuum. But this is the silence of life—the silence that is not empty, but full. And this silence of life is all so natural—as natural as the breathing of a babe. It seems to me everything in the world breathes naturally except our souls. Our souls don't know

how to breathe. They struggle on as if they were being smothered.

What is the matter? Why don't our souls breathe naturally? Is it because God has put them where there is little for them to breathe, or is it only because we don't treat them naturally? Is it because we are always smothering them? What are we doing with these wet blankets? Why don't we give our souls a chance? Why don't we make use of common sense in religion? When we start out to learn the art of Christian living, why do we avoid nature and try to see how unnatural we can be?

We *must* give our souls a chance. If we want to live the Christ life we must live as Christ lived. We must live naturally. We must live reasonably. We must be governed by our God-given common sense. We must honor the laws of God in our spiritual life as we honor them in our physical life. In other words, we must get rid of our inherited heathen notion that the religious man is an unnatural man, and we must learn the truth at the feet of Jesus.

We must take our life lessons at the feet of Jesus. . . .

Yes, I understand. You hesitate to make a beginning because you have not yet made the Great Surrender. But you must not wait for that. You cannot do that except under a great impulse—the impulse of a great vision. Now don't misunderstand me. I am not a visionary. But you know there are visions and visions. There is——

How wonderfully the faces keep coming up in the fire! Just then I saw the eyes of a young woman who, when I first knew her, was nothing more than a pretty bundle of selfishness. I have seldom seen a more abject slave to self. One day she looked into the face of her newborn babe and something happened. Something does not always happen. Sometimes a mother looks into the face of her first baby and sees nothing but a little bundle of pink flesh; and then nothing happens. But this girl saw a vision. She saw her boy! The panorama of his life passed before her and she saw him as he turned now and then to look at her

—now with laughing eyes and now in tears; now her Cherub with golden curls; now her Little Boy Blue; now her Little Man in his first long pants; now her Heart's Hope going off to college. And then, as I have said, something happened. The chain which all her life had bound her ambition to Self snapped and instantly her ambition went out to her boy. From that moment she was ambitious only for her boy; and she never gave Self another thought.

That is the kind of vision you must have before you are going to transfer your allegiance from Self to Christ. Often you have dropped upon your knees and tried to make the surrender. But nothing has happened. And often you have wondered why. But how could anything happen? If you are not sure about God, if you don't realize him, if he is only like a man's name you saw in a book, if you are simply assuming that he exists, how can you surrender yourself to him? You cannot give yourself to one of whom you are not sure. You are not going to surrender to a name, a memory, a character in a book, a shadow, a creation of the imagination, a deity of the past;

you will only surrender to a real, living Being. And you will not surrender to him until he comes and speaks to you. You are not going to put your life into the hands of any being until you have looked into his face. But one day—perhaps while you are reading your Bible, or while you are walking in the fields in the cool of the evening, or while you are looking into the face of death, or while your heart is aching over your sins or over the miseries of your fellowmen—one day when you are hungry for God there will come to you a vision of God. That is, God will come into your consciousness. In some way he will make himself real to you—as real as Christ made himself to Paul on the way to Damascus. The truth may strike into your mind like a flash of lightning or it may dawn upon you slowly like the coming of a new day; but it will come. And in that moment you will look upon him with the eyes of your soul and you will discover that he is your Father and Savior and Lord and Friend and that he has come to you because he loves you. And then something will happen. Your heart will go out to him with infinite yearning and

you will rise and take up everything that you have laid at the feet of Self and lay it down at your Father's feet to be his forever.

But until then, what? Is there nothing for you to do but sit down and wait for him to show himself to you?

A dear companion of my dream-life said to me one day: "My boy, when you were a child you played building houses in the backyard, didn't you? Yes, I am sure you did. And one day you got together a lot of goods-boxes and piled them up around you until they were above your head, and you sat down and for a moment you were happy. And you looked up and saw the blue sky and then you jumped up and ran out and got some boards and shut out the blue sky. And then you chinked up the cracks so that you couldn't hear your father when he called you. And then you went back and sat down again. And you were as proud as Nebuchadnezzar because you had succeeded in shutting out God's blue sky and your father's voice. Now, my boy, your trouble is just this: you are still playing in the backyard. Ever since you have been out in life you have been piling up

things around you and you have piled them up until you can no longer see the blue sky above you or hear your Father's voice. No wonder God does not answer your prayer and reveal himself to you. Do you know what he would do if he should answer it? He would do just as your good old father did when he came home that day and called you half a dozen times and you did not answer. He would walk out into the backyard and the first thing you knew all your precious goods-boxes would go tumbling down with a crash and he would take you by the ear and lead you out from amid the ruins, a poorer but a wiser man, sir."

Does not this suggest an answer to your question? While waiting for God to show himself to you should you not try to clear away the obstacles which you have piled up between yourself and him? Should you not give Christ a chance to come into your life? What about all these self-imposed, so-called duties and distracting pursuits which we have wedged into all our waking moments until there is no longer a quiet corner in the day where we can sit down and think of God? What about all the

unreasonable social demands which have piled up a mountain of folly between our eyes and God? And if the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches have shut us in and bound us about so tightly that we haven't strength to cast them down, should we not at least make a few peepholes here and there in the way of occasional moments set apart for quiet thinking and praying, so that we can catch a glimpse of the blue sky now and then and so that the still small voice will have a chance to filter through into our hearts?

One day this same dear old counselor said to me: "Were you ever thrown with a bright, earnest boy who had just settled upon what he was going to be in life? It's a privilege, my son, a privilege. If you will watch a boy of that sort you will learn something. For one thing he will teach you how to wait. Think of a boy teaching you how to wait! But he will. If you want to know what you should do while waiting on God, watch that tremendously earnest youngster who has decided that he is going to be—say, an electrician. How does he act? Does he sit down and write in

his diary that he is going to be an electrician, and then say to himself, 'That's settled; when I get my education and father arranges things for me I'll begin'? Bless your soul, no. Can you imagine a live boy doing that? Does a boy who is on fire to be an electrician postpone the matter until he has completed his education and his father has arranged things for him? Not for a moment. Not for a single moment, sir. The very instant he decides to be an electrician he begins to think electricity, dream electricity, talk electricity. In an hour he is so full of electricity that you are almost afraid to touch him. Then he disappears and an hour later he comes back with an armful of old electrical magazines and two or three dry batteries. Then you lose sight of him again and when you go to look for him you find him in his little shop in the backyard all tangled up in a maze of wires and batteries and dynamos and spark coils and everything else electrical that he has been able to buy, beg or borrow. In other words, the boy, having decided to be an electrician, waits for the day when he can become a real electrician, not by putting the

matter aside until the time comes, but by beginning at once to *act* as an electrician to the best of his knowledge and ability. And there is the answer to your question, sir.”

I do not know a better answer. The way to wait for God to give you a vision that will bring you to his feet and make you the victorious Christian that you want to be is to begin at once to act as a real Christian to the best of your knowledge and ability. Do you know——

Yes, I see your point. You think that the boy is merely playing at being an electrician and accomplishing nothing and you can see no reason why you should follow his example. I said the same thing to my dear old friend; but I was wrong and so are you. The boy is *not* playing at being an electrician and he *is* accomplishing something. In your eyes and mine he is only playing, but in his own eyes he is working—working with all his might. And he is accomplishing something. He does not know it, but his earnest efforts, awkward and inadequate as they may be, are bringing about a state of mind or an attitude that will wonderfully open up the way toward the thing he is de-

terminated to master; moreover, they are gradually enlarging his capacity for it, and we know perfectly well that if his earnestness has staying qualities the time is coming when he is going to be a real electrician. And so it will be with you if you will to-day begin to act as a Christian to the full extent of your knowledge and ability. You may act very poorly, you may not be a real Christian any more than that boy is a real electrician, but you will not be merely playing at being a Christian and you will accomplish something: you will be doing your best and you will be bringing about a state of mind or an attitude that will give Christ a chance in your life and will wonderfully open up the way toward the goal upon which you have set your heart.

VI

BEGINNING THE DAY WITH GOD

NOW let me see if I can illustrate what I mean by the art of being a Christian. Let us take the first hour in the morning—the hour that takes more grace and more art to be a real Christian perhaps than any other hour of the day. A man is like a locomotive in that, however big and powerful he may be, he is not ready to start on the day's run until he has been especially equipped for it. And a woman—well, one doesn't like to think of a woman as a locomotive; but she is just like a man. What we sometimes call woman's natural piety will no more carry a woman through the day without special equipment than it would carry a man through it if he had it. Like a man she needs a lot of fire and steam, a lot of fuel, and no end of oiling and rubbing; and the longer and harder the journey, the more fire and steam and fuel and oiling and

rubbing she must have. We learned this when we were mastering the art of living, and it has saved us many costly mistakes. We look with pity upon the woman who, when she has a hard day before her, jumps out of bed and runs downstairs to her work as if she were going to a fire. We would not be guilty of such idiocy. We have learned that what we get out of a day depends largely upon what we put into it at the start; and instead of taking the fact that we have a hard day before us as a reason why we should hurry, we take it as an all-important reason why we should not hurry. If there is not much before us to-day, we may give way to our natural indolence and slur over our morning preparations; but if we have a task before us that will require the best that is in us, we are going to put ourselves in the very "pink of condition" for it. You women will force yourselves to rise leisurely; you will make your toilet quietly and thoroughly, and you will not go downstairs until you have done everything you can to bring both body and mind to the highest state of efficiency of which they are capable. We men will take

a little more time for our bath, our rubbing down, our "limbering-up" exercises, our breakfast, our walk downtown—all with a view to reaching the office equipped for our task like a great, shining, pulsating locomotive starting out on its morning run. In a word, before we begin the life of the day we are going to do everything in our power for our bodies and minds, that they may have all the life they are going to need for the day.

And all this we are going to do because we have mastered the art of living.

And yet this morning—or perhaps it was yesterday morning—when a certain good woman I know woke up and suddenly remembered that she had a hard day before her in her Christian life,—that there were heavy burdens to bear and strong temptations to face and great victories to be won,—she jumped out of bed and plunged into the day without taking so much as a single moment to give her soul a bath, or a rub down, or a limbering-up exercise, or a breakfast, or to prepare it in any way whatever to meet the severe demands which she knew

would be made upon its strength in the course of the day.

I do not know anything which the average Christian needs to learn so much as the art of equipping the soul for the day's task. It is not a difficult art, not more difficult than that of equipping the body or mind; and if it were not for the fact that the average Christian is, for some mysterious reason, religiously opposed to the use of common sense in religion, no doubt we should all have mastered it long ago.

In preparing our bodies and minds for the day our aim is to place them at the disposal of *life*. We know that if our lives are to be worth while we must have an abundance of life. Life must take full possession of us, that every part of our being may be fully alive. This is the meaning of all our early morning activities—our stretching, our deep breathing, our bathing, our rubbing down, our sane eating, our methods of getting our minds wide awake and well in hand. We do these things that every part of our physical and intellectual being may have life, and may have it abundantly.

In getting the soul ready for the day the aim is the same. Christ came that we might have life, and that we might have it abundantly. If we want to live a victorious life to-day, we must live the Christ life; and if we want to live the Christ life, we must see to it at the very beginning of the day that every part of our being is opened up to him and placed at his disposal. This means something more than simply making a speech of surrender to Christ, as we are so often content to do. It means the actual opening of our souls to Christ; and as our bodies and minds are important roads leading to the soul, it means giving Christ control of our bodies and minds also.

The first step in equipping the soul for the day is to turn the waking thoughts Godward. Experience as well as psychology has taught us that the direction our thoughts take at the beginning of the day usually determines their tendency for the rest of the day. If our first thoughts turn toward our worries or our selfish interests, we shall find ourselves continually tempted to think of our worries or our selfish interests throughout the day. If we be-

gin by thinking of pleasure, we shall have a hard time later on trying to force ourselves to think of our work. If we indulge in thoughts of ease, we are not likely to appreciate, for that day at least, the glory of enduring hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. On the other hand, if we begin the day with thoughts of God—if we think of him until we realize him, until we become conscious of his presence—we shall go forth to the day's task with a strong upward tendency in thought and feeling, and the chances are that this upward tendency will continue through the day and that we shall end the day as we began it—with God. . . .

Yes, that is true. It is a great deal easier to talk about controlling one's waking thoughts than to control them. You would have no difficulty in sending your last thoughts at night toward God; you could put that down on your day's schedule if necessary. But how are you going to determine the direction of your waking thoughts when they usually start off before you are sufficiently awake to give them direction?

Here is another simple fact of psychology worth remembering: If you are deeply interested in a matter when you go to bed at night and dismiss it just before going to sleep, with the determination to take it up again the first thing in the morning, it will hang around you, so to speak, throughout the night, and when you wake up in the morning you will find it waiting for you. You have often taken advantage of this fact in a matter of work or pleasure; you can just as easily take advantage of it in the matter of religion. If you will spend a little while thinking of God before you go to sleep—that is, if you will think of him in an interested way as you would think of your plans for to-morrow, and will go to sleep with the desire and determination to think of him the first thing in the morning—you will not only find it easy to think of God as soon as you awake, but you will very likely find him in your mind at the moment of waking.

But it is not enough to turn the waking thoughts Godward; one must turn the waking heart Godward also. This is the second step. A Christian must begin the day like a lark; he

must wing his way heavenward with a song. This is not merely a joyful privilege; it is a necessity. It is a necessity because, if you are going to be a real Christian during the day, if you are going to live the victorious life, you must mount at once to the heights of faith, of perfect trust; and if you want to reach the heights at once, you must mount with a song in your heart. This, of course, means that when you begin to think of God you must think the thoughts that will warm your heart and fill it with yearning toward him. Thinking of God does not necessarily warm the heart; you must think of him in heart-warming ways. If you will think of him as a loved one, if you will think of some of the many ways in which he has shown his love for you, your heart will begin to warm toward him, and soon it will be winging its way toward him with a song. You will praise his name. You may not sing with your lips, but you will sing with your heart; and when your heart mounts toward God with a song, it will leave the shadows. It will rise above all doubts and fears. It will not stop short of the very pinnacle of perfect trust.

What a glorious privilege it is to begin the day at such a height!

There are many little means of helping the heart in its upward flight which are greatly valued by those who have long practiced the art of beginning the day with God. One is to keep on a little table by the bed a Bible in which the most precious promises have been marked and to read two or three of these promises before rising. Another is to keep one's hymn book on the little table also, and to read a bit of a glad hymn here and there. Of course you will remember that you have placed your body and mind, as well as your soul, at Christ's disposal, and you will do everything you can to make them serve him rather than hinder him in his work for your soul. For instance, if your spirits are depressed, you will not neglect to peep through the blinds while you are dressing, that you may refresh your heart with a glimpse of the morning—God's morning; and if the day is dark, you will not forget to make a bright light in the room and to hum a bit of a joyful tune. All through one's physical preparations for the day, whether the morning is

dark or bright, the heart should continually be going out toward God in song or prayer—little heart melodies and little heart ejaculations, especially ejaculatory prayers of consecration.

There are other little helps which will suggest themselves as you go along. The important thing to remember is that you have a body and mind as well as a soul and that if you do not place your body and mind at Christ's disposal, instead of helping the soul they will be as millstones about its neck. Let your body and mind have their way and they will get in the way of your soul; put them at Christ's disposal and they will help your soul on its way.

Now suppose you have begun the day by taking these two steps. You have turned your waking mind toward God and you have turned your waking heart toward him. You are standing at your mirror completing your toilet and humming a little tune—a little hymn of praise—and your body and mind and heart are all in a glow. Suddenly it flashes upon you that you have a hard day before you. You have got to attempt some things you have never attempted before and they are going to take all

the strength you have—and more. What will you do about it? Your first impulse is to drop everything and run downstairs. But you have learned the art of living—rather of physical and mental living—and you curb your impulse. But what will you do? There is no time for your breakfast, but, time or no time, you are not going to plunge into the day's work with an unequipped body. That is settled. But you have learned that your greatest struggles on a hard day are never physical but spiritual, and reason tells you that it is far more important for you to go to your day's task with a strong, well-equipped soul than it is to go with a strong, well-equipped body. What will you do? Will you take the time that is necessary to equip your body and leave off the equipment of your soul until the day's struggles are over? If the greatest battles of the day are to be fought by the spirit, should you not put the equipment of your spirit foremost?

I wish I could tell you how deeply I feel about this matter. The secret of a strong Christian is in his closet and you will find it there early in the morning. You may have to

postpone your quiet half-hour until after breakfast, but don't forget that the world has never known a great Christian who did not set great store by his morning half-hour with God. Men who win battles don't rush into the battlefield unequipped. It is folly to hope that you can spend the day with God if you are not willing to begin it with him. It is an insult to God to plunge into the day's work depending upon him to go with you and supply your needs on your flippant promise to recognize him with a bedside prayer when the day is over.

We are making a great ado nowadays about hungry mouths and full dinner-pails and I am glad. I am glad that our eyes are at last open to a vision of the world's physical hunger. But let us not forget that for every man who is faint for want of a dinner there are a hundred men falling by the way for want of food for their souls. The streets are full of fainting souls and we never see them—we are so busy looking for men with empty dinner-pails. And there are so many good, well-meaning people among them, too—people who want to win great spiritual victories but who know no bet-

ter than to risk their souls in the day's battle without feeding them on so much as a mouthful of the Word of God and without giving them a chance to snatch a single full breath of the air of heaven.

VII

SOUL FEEDING

READING one's Bible should be as natural as eating. It *is* eating. I remember——

Ah! There's another vision in the coals. It is a beautiful thrush—the brown thrasher kind. I came upon it one day last summer in the mountains. It had just found a big juicy worm and it was making the most of it. There's something strangely fascinating about the way a bird handles its dinner problem. He goes at it so naturally and with such wonderful faith. He never handicaps himself with artificial ways—like humans. If I had been in that little thrasher's place I should have laid off a square rod of land and proceeded to work it over anxiously inch by inch from left to right and from right to left. But he knew better. He went direct to the spot where he knew juicy worms were most likely to be found. And he

found what he was looking for. And when he found it he ate it regardless of etiquette. Why should a bird care for etiquette? He doesn't have to be unnatural. He doesn't have to eat by the book. He doesn't have to swallow one-sixteenth of his worm now and another sixteenth to-morrow and so on for sixteen successive days. And he won't. He hates rules and artificialities and forms and he is going to be natural or nothing. I like that. I haven't the courage, I confess, to follow his example at my own table, and perhaps it is well that I haven't: etiquette is more comfortable; but when it comes to giving the soul its breakfast I hope I shall always be brave enough to be natural.

For there is nothing that dries up one's devotional hours so completely as artificiality in one's Bible reading. Whatever you do, don't lay off a square of the Word of God and work it through verse by verse at the rate of so many verses a day. Don't adopt a hard-and-fast plan of Bible study and devote so many minutes to it by your watch. Unless one has a good deal of time on one's hands, I am not

sure that one should attempt any Bible study in the early morning at all. In any event, one should not begin with study: one should begin with devotional reading.

Devotional reading is prayerful—prayer-filled—reading and if you would read devotionally you must choose passages that make you feel like praying. Some passages make you feel like analyzing them. You want to put them under the microscope. But this is laboratory work, and you don't want to begin the day in the laboratory. What you want now is food.

There is my little brown thrasher again. By the way, did you ever notice a bird when he first wakes up in the morning? A bird, you know, has a very high temperature. It is so high that his food digests with great rapidity, and however full he may be, when he goes to sleep he wakes up empty and faint and he is in no condition for anything until he can get something to eat. That is the way with our souls: I don't know why, but for some reason our souls usually wake up in the morning empty and faint. There is more truth than humor in the familiar saying that the average man is

a heathen until he gets his breakfast. The world long ago noticed how easy it was to go wrong early in the morning and laid it to nerves. But nerves don't deserve half the blame that is laid upon them. It is true that when we awake our bodies are usually let down, but one doesn't usually act like a heathen simply because his body is let down; usually the trouble is with his let-down soul. We may call it nerves, but when it is all over an honest Christian will admit that his nerves might not have acted so badly if he had not neglected to feed his soul.

But I have wandered from my point. In reading the Bible devotionally one should follow the example of my little brown thrasher and go direct to the places where one is likely to find the food one needs. Nature has marked the places quite plainly for the birds, and God's saints have marked the places quite plainly for us. If you will examine the Bible of a mature man or woman who has fathomed the depths of Christian experience, you will find perhaps three-fourths of the thumb-marks in the gospels and the Psalms. You may find them quite thick

at a few points in the prophets and epistles, but you will usually find them thickest of all among the words of Jesus. The thumb-marks in the Bible of a victorious Christian are pretty safe for a hungry soul to follow, though of course you should not follow them without regard to your individual tastes and needs. You will find it a good plan to mark all the passages of a devotional nature as you come upon them so that when you begin your devotional reading you can turn to them without delay. And remember, the passages you will want are those in which you can hear God talking to you and which will often move you to talk to God.

In learning the art of physical living you have discovered that even in so simple a matter as eating one's breakfast much depends upon what you do to give your food a fair chance. You have found that it is not enough to select the right sort of food: you must eat properly and under circumstances that will encourage digestion. You know that you cannot afford to eat alone or hurriedly or in a gloomy room. If the morning is dark you will turn up the lights and you will make an extra effort

to be cheerful. You will be careful about the little things the average woman overlooks. You will even insist upon sitting in the same place, and in the same chair, for you have found that when you sit in a different place your body and mind are slow to adjust themselves to it and there is a certain nervous disturbance which, to say the least, does not do you any good.

Now what is true of the body in this matter, as in so many others, is just as true of the soul. If you want to make the most of your spiritual breakfast you must make use of your common sense and do what you can to give your food a fair chance. It is not enough to select proper food. The fact that it is the Word of God that you are going to read is no reason why you should imagine that it is going to nourish you regardless of the way in which you may read it. God does not work miracles to make up for our carelessness in the land of the spirit any more than he does to make up for our carelessness in the land of matter. We must do our part. We must make use of what he has given us. When you eat your breakfast you don't allow your mind to handicap your body;

you try to make it help your body. So in feeding upon God's Word you must not allow your mind and body to handicap your soul: you must try to make them help your soul.

Many good people make a failure of their morning devotions because they allow their bodies and minds to handicap them when they might make them serve them. If you sit down just anywhere and undertake to read your Bible it will take several minutes of your half-hour to adjust yourself to your surroundings. If you try to read where the light is bad and where you are likely to be interrupted you are not likely to get yourself adjusted at all. On the other hand, if you will set apart a quiet spot—a room, if possible—to be kept sacred to this one purpose and always go to the same spot and sit in the same chair under the same bright light and use the same Bible, you will soon find that your surroundings have not only ceased to be a hindrance but have become a positive and important help. You know how it works in other matters. You know that if you should spend half an hour a day for a month reading Browning in the big leather chair in the library

you would produce a Browning atmosphere around that chair that would tempt you to read Browning every time you sat in it. So if you will carry your Bible every day at the same hour to the same quiet spot, you will find that the Word of God will open up to you in the sacred stillness like flowers opening up to the morning sun. If a woman has a single spot in her home that she can call her own—I am well aware that there are many who haven't—she cannot do better than set it apart for her morning meeting-place with God.

And as one should always go to the same spot, so one should always take the same Bible—a Bible that one has read until it comes naturally to one's hand. Of course one should see to it that the print is large, for large print is like a loud, emphatic voice that wakes you up, while small print is like a feeble, drowsy little voice that puts you to sleep. How many devotional hours have become a bore and a drag and finally ceased to be for no other reason than the somnific effect of unreadable type!

If it is important to avoid hurry in eating

one's breakfast, it is far more important to avoid it in feeding the soul. Hurry is as deadly an enemy to devotion as sin. You simply cannot get into a devotional frame if you have got to watch the clock. Everything depends upon realizing God, and to realize God one must be quiet. "Be still and know that I am God." This is the first thing a wise woman does when she takes her Bible and sits down to spend her morning half-hour with God. To realize God one must be still. It is not a matter of getting God to come to us. He is already with us. It is not a matter of getting him to speak to us. He is already speaking to us. What we have got to do is to be still so that we can hear. It is a still small voice and he does not raise it. We must be still. It is not enough to go off to the quietest spot we can find. I have gone to my beautiful spring in the wood and sat down in the cool stillness and listened in vain for his voice. I have sat here before the fire in the still twilight of a winter evening and strained my ears in vain for the faintest whisper of his love. There was too much noise in my brain. What one needs to do is to sit

perfectly still and give one's disturbing thoughts a chance to ooze out of the mind and——

Yes, I know it is difficult at the beginning, but it soon becomes easy with practice. Some people have learned the art of helping their minds in the emptying process. There is such a thing as sitting perfectly still and—well, it is something like taking one's brain in one's hands and squeezing all thoughts out of it as one would squeeze water out of a sponge. In one way or another one can empty one's mind if one will only be still. When that is done—when the world and all its distractions have utterly vanished—you should turn your mind quietly toward God. Speak to him softly. Call him Father. Then open the Book and look for the precious bits of devotional reading which you have marked from time to time. Don't force yourself to read passages that don't appeal to you. Follow your appetite. Be natural. When you have read a sentence pause and try to realize that you are listening to God's message to your own heart. Try to catch the tone of the Father's voice. Perhaps you will

feel like answering him. Obey the impulse. If you have just read, "Blessed are the merciful," and your heart feels like crying out, "O Father, make me merciful," by all means let it cry. Never smother an impulse to pray. Prayer always has the right of way.

VIII

WHEN PRAYER IS AS NATURAL AS BREATHING

IF reading one's Bible should be as natural as eating, praying should be as natural as breathing. It *is* breathing. We usually think of praying as something different from everything else we do in life—something, indeed, quite apart from life. As a matter of fact, it is the most lifelike thing we do: it is simply life itself at a concentrated and intense point. Somebody has said that life—true life—is a day spent with God. In spending the day with a friend we are always near each other, but now and then we like to draw up our chairs very close together and open our hearts very wide to each other. So in spending life's day with God we are always near him, but sometimes our hearts get very full and we like to get just as close to him as we can and unbosom ourselves to him. And this is prayer. It is all there is of prayer. Call it what we will,

it is simply a matter of unbosoming oneself to God. It is not an unearthly thing which we must do in an unearthly way: it is a perfectly natural thing—as natural as the calm, sweet face of my dear old spring looking up to heaven.

Did you ever notice how natural Jesus looks in prayer? I know that he often rose a great while before day and went off to a lonely spot to pray. I know that to some minds this suggests crucifixion of the flesh; and I know there are good people who cannot feel that they are really following him if they do not begin the day with some sort of self-crucifixion. They must do something that is against the grain. They must go through a certain hard, unnatural routine. They must force themselves to read so many chapters of the Bible before breakfast, regardless of whether they are genealogical tables or inspirational passages, and devote so much time to prayer regardless of what they are praying. But Jesus did not rise before day to crucify the flesh. He rose to feed his soul. He rose not to resist a natural desire, but to yield to a natural desire. He was hungry

for the Father and he did the most natural thing he could do—he rose, regardless of the hour, and went off to a quiet spot where he could commune with the Father without interruption.

Prayer never means much to us until we get rid of this strange idea that there is something uncanny or unreal about it. It never becomes as natural as breathing until we come to think of it as something that is as natural as breathing. There are so many natural aids to worship that one never thinks of using so long as one thinks of prayer as an unnatural thing. This reminds me, by the way, of a little incident of my summer dreams. It was a moonlight night in the mountains and we were all sitting on the porch trying to listen to a rather noisy young fellow who had monopolized the conversation for an hour or more telling us about some of his remarkable discoveries. He said that he was making a speech one night when he had a sudden attack of stage fright and his knees trembled so that he thought he would fall. Then he got ashamed of himself and made a desperate effort to appear brave. He

straightened himself up, clenched his fists, threw out his chest and put his right foot forward. "And do you know," he said, "all my fear disappeared in an instant and I became as calm as a May morning. That set me to thinking and I discovered that if you want to feel a certain way the simple act of putting your body in the attitude that expresses that particular feeling will usually produce the feeling you want."

It was a brand-new idea to him and no one was cruel enough to tell him better; but when he went indoors there was a quiet laugh and then every man had a story to tell of how he had taken advantage of this simple law in his business or social life. One young fellow who had been reading the new psychology was so enthusiastic over the result of his experiments that he was disposed to accept the materialistic theory that all feeling is the result of appropriate action. This did not find general favor, but all agreed that it is often possible to produce a particular feeling and nearly always possible to strengthen it if it already exists by making use of the action that is peculiar to

it. A successful drygoods man told how careful he had always been to get himself in the best possible shape before going to the bank for a loan. "I never go," he said, "without looking after my clothes, my general appearance, the way I hold myself, my walk—everything—because I found long ago that in order to approach a banker successfully I must be in a certain frame of mind and that I could help myself into this frame of mind if I put on good clothes, walked down to the bank with a firm step and entered with an open, manly air of quiet confidence." Just then an old gentleman asked if any one present had made use of the same law in his religious life. "Why, that's a natural law," said the merchant. "What's that got to do with religion?" "My friend," replied the old man quietly, "there is but one universe and one life, even as there is but one God. The religious life is not less a life because it is religious, but more. All that God has put here in the world is for the purpose of helping us live. Why should we make use of everything he has placed within our reach to help us in our business or social activities

and never seek to turn these things to our advantage in our religious activities? We are souls, it is true, but we have minds and bodies. If we must make use of our minds and bodies in our religious activities, why should we not use them intelligently and to the best advantage as we do when we use them in any other form of activity? If it is my privilege and duty to make the most of natural laws when I make a speech to my fellow men, why isn't it my privilege and duty to make the most of natural laws when I talk to God in prayer?"

There are so many ways in which we can make our minds and bodies serve us in prayer. For example: Imagine yourself on your knees trying to pray. For some reason your devotional reading has been a failure: it has not made you feel like praying. But you are trying. You are trying to translate the feeble desires of your heart into words, but without uttering the words. That is to say, you are trying to pray without making use of anything but your mind. And your mind is moving slowly. Somehow you cannot get hold of things. You realize that you are not really

praying: you are only doing a little thinking and you are not succeeding very well at that. You cannot concentrate your thoughts. What should you do? If you were a child at school and should discover yourself to be in this stupid state, you would know what to do. And you would do it. You would bring your body to the aid of your mind. You would open your lips and let them whisper the words as you form them. That would help matters a little. And if your teacher should be called out of the room for a moment you would utter them out loud. And that would help wonderfully. That was one of the earliest discoveries of your mental life and you were not slow to make use of it. And that led to another discovery. You found that speaking aloud would not only drive confusion and stupidity from your mind, but it would sometimes wonderfully stir up your interest. And you made use of this discovery also. Many a time you would work yourself up to a high pitch of enthusiasm just by shouting and listening to your own voice. By and by you were taught that this sort of thing was not refined and then you learned how to do

your thinking and feeling with your mouth shut; but to this day you have not ceased to value these primitive secrets of your childhood and you do not hesitate to make use of them when it comes to a matter of—well, say a matter of business. If you were trying to settle a matter of business and found yourself very stupid and you thought that you could help matters by speaking out loud, you would exercise your right to speak out loud even if it made the windows rattle. Now let me ask, Why should you not exercise the same right in a matter of religion? Why should you handicap yourself in praying by forcing yourself to think in unspoken language at a very stupid moment when by giving voice to your thoughts you might overcome your stupidity and succeed in really praying? Why should you not exercise your right to pray aloud even at the risk of making the windows rattle? Not that you are likely to make them rattle. You are not going to shout at God. On the contrary, if you are conscious of his presence you will speak very softly. But you will speak: if you will follow the promptings of your heart you

will utter yourself in words; and you will utter the words softly, just as you would talk to your mother in a moment of great tenderness. And if you once obey the impulse you will continue to obey it, for you will find that the sound of your voice speaking softly to God will help you in ways that you have never imagined.

There are other physical means which you will find helpful in overcoming stupidity and quickening the devotional feeling. You have noticed how an attitude of indifference usually begets indifference, while an attitude of earnestness often begets earnestness. This suggests that when you pray you should assume the attitude which you have always assumed when you were intensely in earnest. A healthy woman whose heart is yearning for God does not go to bed to pray, though she may throw herself upon it face downward. Nor does she loll lazily in a chair.

Again you have noticed that when you approach God in an humble and reverent spirit you naturally fall into an humble and reverent posture. This suggests that when you pray you should seek to quicken your sense of hu-

mility and reverence by assuming the posture which you naturally assume when you approach God in an humble and reverent spirit.

Some time ago I found that looking up in prayer weakened my sense of the presence of God. The tendency was to make me think of God as dwelling in the distant heavens. Since then I have bowed my head reverently as if I were standing before him and I have found it much easier to think of him as being actually present with me.

There are many other little means which will suggest themselves from time to time if you will only keep in mind the fact that in praying you are engaged in a perfectly natural exercise in which the body and mind have a perfect right to serve the soul. They may seem trifles at the beginning, but as you go along you will get a better opinion of them, and by and by you will begin to count them among the little threads that make up the warp and woof of the beautiful garment of the Christian life.

IX

COMPANIONS FOR THE DAY'S WALK

WE have been talking about equipping ourselves for the day's task, as if such a thing were possible. As a matter of fact, we can no more equip ourselves to run a whole day than we can equip a locomotive to run a whole day. What we do for a locomotive before it starts out will count in many ways throughout the day's journey, but all along the way we must shovel in the fuel and here and there we must stop for more water and more coal, and then there's the rubbing and oiling, which must go on almost without ceasing. So, what we can do for ourselves at the beginning of the day will count in many ways through all the experiences of the day, but, like a locomotive, we shall be continually running out of fuel and we shall need almost ceaseless oiling and cleaning to get us safely through the day's journey.

I see you are wondering how you are going to find time to live if you must take all of your time looking after yourself. But it will not take all of your time to look after yourself. I have an athletic friend who does so many things for his body in the course of the day that you would wonder how he finds time for anything else; yet his physical culture activities are no more in the way of his day's work than the few things I do for my body are in the way of my day's work. They take more time—a great deal more—but they add no real burden to his mind, and what he loses in time is far more than made up in increased efficiency: he can do almost twice as much work in a day as I can.

What is his secret? Simply this: he has transformed his culture activities into regular habits, just as you and I from infancy gradually transformed our ordinary health-and-strength-making activities into regular habits. And this, as you know, is the first secret of the art of physical living. If we had never formed any regular physical habits we would not be alive to-day, or at least we should be

dragging along at a poor dying rate. It is simply impossible to live a physical life that is worth while if we must look after every breath we take to see that we are breathing properly, or if we must keep an eye on all our movements to see that every muscle is given a fair chance. If we want to live physically—really live—we must have the help of regular habits.

We have learned this to our cost. Our summer vacation is a part of the cost. In our modern life, men and women, especially women, drive themselves so hard during the winter, and so incessantly, that they can find little time for health-and-strength-making habits and when the winter is over they drop. Then they drag themselves through the spring and when the summer comes they are hauled up into the mountains for air—that is to say, for life—for the life they have cheated themselves out of by their irregularities. We simply cannot live a worth-while life physically if we do not have regular habits that will keep our lungs and tissues and pores and all the other organs and channels of our bodies wide open to life.

And what is true of our bodies in this re-

spect is true of our souls. We don't like to admit it—somehow we feel as if it were a reflection upon Christ to admit it—but we might as well face the truth. Try as we may, we simply cannot live a victorious spiritual life if we do not form regular habits that will keep the channels of our spiritual nature open to life—to the Spirit of Christ who is our life. And it is no reflection upon Christ to say so. All the glory of saving us and transforming us into his image belongs to him and we do not take anything from his glory when we say that if we expect him to save us and transform us we must do all that he has given us the power to do toward placing every part of our being at his disposal.

What we must do is to learn the rules that are essential to a well-ordered spiritual life and put them into practice and persist in practicing them just as my athletic friend practices his health exercises—until they become second nature. It is not as hard to learn these rules as we sometimes imagine. The thought of them appalls us, just as the sight of piled-up work appalls us; but experience has taught us that

if we will go on with our work gently and persistently and not try to do everything at once we shall clear up our pile in the course of time, and the experience of many Christians assures us that we can clear up this problem in the same way.

A good way to form good habits is to fix in the mind a few mottoes or truths which call upon us to do certain things and which act as constant reminders of the things to be done. To illustrate, suppose you had just finished your morning preparations and had started downstairs to breakfast. If as you go you should try to think of everything that is expected of a Christian woman at breakfast I fear breakfast would be over before you began to behave as a Christian at all. You would not attempt anything so absurd simply as a woman, a mother, or as the head of the household. You never think of saying to yourself: "I want to be a true woman at breakfast; let me see just how a true woman is expected to act." All you try to do is to see that you do not lose sight of the fact that you have undertaken the part of a true woman, and that a true woman

is a true woman everywhere and under all circumstances. So, when you start down to breakfast as a Christian woman, you don't have to remind yourself that a Christian woman is polite or that she doesn't lose her temper because the toast is a little too brown; you simply need to remember that you are living the life of a Christian, that as a Christian every part of your being is at Christ's disposal, and that therefore a Christian is a Christian everywhere and under all circumstances. If you enter the breakfast room dominated by the thought that you are at Christ's disposal you are likely to act as one who is at Christ's disposal, whether you remember that a Christian doesn't lose her temper over burnt toast or not. For if you regard yourself as at Christ's disposal you will not go to the table with your mind and heart set on self, and so you will not be critical and hard to please. A woman may be so bent on self-gratification that if the toast is browned a shade beyond her orders she will lose her temper and destroy her happiness for a whole day: so a woman may be so bent on gratifying or helping others and doing God's

will that she will not know or care whether her own toast is brown or black. Mind you, I say her own, not other people's.

God does not perform miracles to encourage laziness, but I am sure that if we will do our best to keep the fact that we have put ourselves at Christ's disposal in mind we can depend upon him to see that we do not forget it even at such critical emergencies as the sudden appearance of burnt toast at breakfast.

Along with this wonderful habit-making thought that we have put ourselves at Christ's disposal we should carry with us through the day another habit maker that is almost as wonderful, and that is the thought of our kinship with God and our fellow men. God is the Father of all men and women and we are all brothers. It is wonderful what these two thoughts will do for us whenever we take them with us as our companion guides under God for our day's walk. Once recognize them as your daily guides from God and they will come to you every morning like two friends and take their places on either side ready to go with you through the whole day. And they will

prompt you every step of the way. You will even find it possible to think of the cook who spoiled your toast as a human being who has a right to the consideration that one child of God owes another.

Imagine yourself walking down the street after your morning's work between these two guides. You are glad as you go to think of God as your Father and as glad to remember that every human being is your brother or your sister. And an unutterable peace fills your heart when you remember that you have put your body, mind and soul at God's disposal for the day and forever. Suddenly a rude woman jostles you in the crowd and as suddenly Self springs to your tongue to administer a stinging rebuke; but the guide on your left quickly whispers that Self no longer has any authority over your tongue: you have put your tongue at Christ's disposal and if Christ is not disturbed over that rude woman's conduct toward his servant there is no reason why you should be. And by his help you close your lips and pass on.

A moment later you turn down a quiet side

street and presently come upon a poor decrepit old man who has fallen and broken his arm. Pity springs up, but instantly Self rushes in to remind you of your engagement at the dressmaker's. Why not go on and get your dressmaker to 'phone for the ambulance? But the guide on your left again reminds you that you are not at Self's disposal and the guide on your right whispers, "He is your brother"; and the next moment you are playing the part of the Good Samaritan, utterly oblivious to the fact that half an hour's delay will put your work at the dressmaker's aside for a week.

At the dressmaker's everything has gone wrong and, quick as a flash, something like a savage springs up from somewhere within you; but before it can utter itself both guides clap their hands to your lips. You return to the crowded thoroughfare to do your shopping and soon fall into the hands of an irritable clerk, but just as you reach the verge of disgracing yourself the guide on your left whispers a calming word and the thought of Him at whose service you have placed everything, even to your nerves, brings you to yourself again.

There is a salacious play at the theater and the morning paper said something about the questionable character of the pictures in the show-windows. Something—is it Self this time or the devil himself?—something suggests that you stop and take a look at the pictures. This time the guide on your left reminds you that you have placed your eyes at the disposal of Christ, and you turn away with a blush at the thought that you were about to make such use of eyes that have been consecrated to his service. You have hardly settled down at home before the maid brings a card and you enter the parlor to find yourself face to face with an agent. Instantly Self springs up to show her the door, but both guides again hasten to remind you who you are, and the spirit of the Compassionate One inspires you to frame a kind word that sends the agent away refreshed by the revelation that there is one woman in the world who really recognizes an agent as a sister. You return to your work and a man downtown calls you over the 'phone to give you an opportunity "on the side" to invest a few hundred in a way that will give you a clear

fifty per cent. at other people's expense; but the guide on your right begs you to remember that the people whom you are asked to help fleece are your brothers, and you spurn the offer, as you should do, as the offer of a traitor to humanity. By and by a friend comes in to make an engagement for an evening of exhausting pleasure which, whether innocent in itself or not, would at least unfit you for to-morrow's duties, and the guide on your left again speaks to remind you that you have placed your body at the disposal of Christ and you give your friend the only answer a Christian can afford to give. You plunge into your work again and half an hour later you come to yourself with an overwhelming sense of weariness. The next instant the guide on your right places his hand gently upon your shoulder and whispers: "God is your Father, and although he has been with you all through these trying hours you have not spoken to him once." And with that quiet voice in your ears you go to the door and turn the key that you may have an uninterrupted little while with the Blessed Restorer of harassed and tired spirits.

Thus the day goes and under the guidance of these two faithful servants of the Supreme Guide, and by his unceasing help, you come at last to the close with the calm spirit of a child who can look into his father's face at bedtime with tenderness, unashamed and unafraid.

X

THE MAGIC WAND

DO you know Grumbling Jane? I am sure you have heard of her. She has been the town torment for fifty years, so people say, though as a matter of fact she is only fifty years old, and there was a time when she was not Grumbling Jane, but a really respectable woman. At twenty-four she was a pretty, fresh young thing, possessed of a husband, two children and all the selfishness that the world cheerfully grants to a woman so long as she is a pretty, fresh young thing, and has reasonably fair prospects. But at twenty-four her husband died, leaving her penniless, and the poor creature sat down in her grief and held her hands, while the neighbors, moved by compassion, came and poured their kindness into her lap. And then the transformation came. Absorbed in her sorrow and herself, she never gave her neighbors a thought, except to look

for them as the ravens of God sent to provide her with bread; and when in the course of time the bread supply ran low, she began to think of them as very careless ravens who needed to be scolded and made to do their duty. And from that day she has been Grumbling Jane—the unspeakable creature whom everybody knows under protest and avoids as a helpless man avoids a hard creditor. For Grumbling Jane is possessed of the idea that the world owes her a living, and the world has never had its doorbell rung by a more persistent collector.

Just two blocks away from Grumbling Jane lives a poor woman whom I like to call the Widow Whitesoul. I don't think you have ever heard of her. She too has had her day of sorrow; for when her husband died he left her half a dozen children and twice as many unpaid bills. She cried herself to sleep every night; but when morning came she washed the tear stains away and went bravely forth, glad of the chance to give the world a full day's work for a half-day's pay if only she might get rid of her bills and keep her children. By and by sickness came and the wolf crept up to the

door. But not until the gaunt beast was at the very throats of her children did anybody find it out. Uncle Joe, he of the great heart and the big basket, found it out and filled his basket to the brim and went over to see her. And when he handed her the basket the look of gratitude that came into her poor starved face so transfigured her countenance that his heart melted at the sight, and all the way back home he tried to find an excuse to take her another basket to-morrow. He told some friends about it, and they, too, tried it; for as you may know the world is always ready to trade off a basket of good things for one look of genuine gratitude. And they have been keeping it up ever since; for as Uncle Joe says, when a body takes a basket to the Widow Whitesoul he always gets the better of the bargain.

I don't suppose there was a great deal of difference between Grumbling Jane and the Widow Whitesoul at the beginning except that Grumbling Jane's word was "self," while the Widow Whitesoul's was "sacrifice"; but that is enough to account for anything. For when selfishness, like a worm, eats through a woman's

heart and destroys the last trace of gratitude that God put into it, what is left, however pretty and fresh and young she may have been, is never anything more nor less than Grumbling Jane.

I wish we could realize how large a part gratitude plays in every life that is really worth while. We never think of it as one of the fundamentals—like faith or hope or love—yet when we try to conceive of the lowest depths to which a human being can fall, we almost invariably think of an ingrate. For an ingrate is the one human being whom we can never by any stretch of courtesy call a brother. We instinctively feel that he is something less than human. Moreover, we know that the noblest spirits always excel in gratitude. And this is not all. We have never been able to define happiness; but when we try to recall our happiest experiences, we invariably think of those superlative moments when we were so overwhelmed with a sense of the kindness of God to us that we could do nothing but cry out, "Thank God! thank God!" Apparently happiness is composed largely of gratitude. Still further,

gratitude is the shortest way to real wealth. As there is no man so poor as he who cannot give thanks, so there is none so rich as he who abounds in thankfulness. A millionaire, devoid of gratitude, may grumble over a banquet; a poor man with a thankful heart may rejoice over a crust. "What?" cried a starved woman over a stale loaf; "all this and Christ too?" Gratitude is the magic wand that transforms a crust into a cake, a threadbare garment into a silken robe, a monotonous existence into a life of song. It is like a good appetite: to a hungry man the plainest food makes the richest feast; so to a heart full of thankfulness the simplest life is the sweetest. To an unthankful spirit all life is a desert; to a thankful spirit every desert is a rose garden.

If all this is true, it follows that he who would enrich his life must cultivate a sense of gratitude. What can we do to develop this oft-neglected virtue? There are just two things: we must persistently think of the things we should be thankful for, and we must give utterance to the thankfulness that is already in our hearts. Mortal man naturally thinks of

his ills. If he is not careful, his mind will be wholly absorbed by them. He does not naturally think of his blessings; it is a habit he can acquire only by cultivation. It is a true saying that to be thankful one must first be *thankful*.

Ungrateful people are always thoughtless and, as a rule, the thoughtful are the most thankful. I never knew an ungrateful man to sit down and count his blessings; he only counts his acquisitions or achievements. And I never knew a grateful man to habitually count his blessings who did not become more grateful. Man is a great counter, but he is so apt to spend his time counting to no purpose. Some of us are always counting our chickens before they are hatched. If we would oftener count the chickens God has already given us, I am sure those to come would hatch out the better. Some of us, too, are always counting the things we have acquired or the things we have achieved. This is a miserly habit and at best brings us only the miser's selfish joy in counting his gold. At worst it sets a man to worshipping himself as his own particular provi-

dence. If we would only count our blessings—the things that come to us from above—our thoughts, instead of centering in ourselves, would go out toward the Giver of blessings, and our hearts would continually melt with tenderness at the thought of him. Moreover, if we would count our blessings we would enjoy an ever-deepening sense of security; for instead of resting our future upon our possessions or ourselves—both precarious crutches—we would rest it upon the Eternal Foundation.

But if we want to be thankful we must do more than think; we must give thanks. Gratitude is like love; it cannot live without utterance. It must be ever giving forth. The more we give the more we have. The more we give expression by word and deed to our love for our fellow men the more we will love them. We must express our love or eventually we shall have no love to express. We must express our gratitude or eventually we shall have no gratitude to express. The man who fails to pay his debts of gratitude inevitably becomes a pauper; soon he will have no gratitude to pay. Here is one of the great offices of prayer.

We start in the Christian life with the idea that prayer is a harvest machine; we never use it but for ingathering. But if you will watch these saintly souls who have climbed up into the white light of God's love you will find that they use prayer largely as an outlet. They have almost ceased to go to God to ask for things; they go to pour out their gratitude for what he has already given them. It is not until prayer becomes largely praise that it becomes a delight.

XI

THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM

I USED to think that sitting before one's fire in the twilight must be the most undiverting of all human experiences, but lately I have found it is almost like sitting at one's open window overlooking the street. Indeed it is far more interesting, for most of the faces I see from my window are strangers, while these visions that are continually coming up in the coals are all familiar faces and they always appear in the midst of their history, like a portrait printed in the center of a biographical page. Then, too, so many of them have a way of melting into new ones, like the dissolving views of a stereopticon. Yesterday I saw a little girl with eyes as blue as the sky and hair like an October sunset, and the next moment the vision had dissolved into a beautiful woman with the same eyes and the same hair, and in her lap sat—could it have been the same little girl with

eyes as blue as the sky and hair like an October sunset? And just a moment ago I saw a woman——

I wish you could see her as I saw her then and as she really looked just five years ago. Her face was a beautiful soul window through which one looked upon what seemed to be vast stores of that priceless treasure of womanhood which we call sweetness. Her sympathies, you would have said, were as deep as the unsounded depths of a woman's heart. Still, if you had looked carefully you would have discovered that they were lacking in breadth. She was one of those women who are always helping somebody, but who are usually interested only in helpless cases. There was a poor bedridden creature out near the cemetery who would never get well, and a poor little cripple on the next block who was gradually wasting away, and there were a dozen other cases quite as distressing, and these filled up her heart.

When people tried to enlist her services in a good cause she usually said that her hands were already full. And they were. It keeps one busy to be an angel of mercy with fourteen

helpless mortals to look after. But three or four years ago something happened—she never knew what,—and she suddenly became violently agitated over the wrongs from which certain women in her town were suffering. For days and weeks she could think of nothing but the wrongs of those women. She was simply burning up with sympathy for them. But as I have said, her sympathies, though deep, were never very broad and she soon narrowed down her interest to this particular cause. All her sympathy was for certain women who were struggling with certain wrongs and she no longer felt any interest in the poor objects of her care who would never struggle again. She became impatient with the bedridden woman near the cemetery who, she now concluded, was bedridden simply because she didn't try to help herself; and with so many downtrodden women all around her she hardly felt called upon to waste time with the little cripple who, she was sure, really didn't need the sympathy she had lavished upon him after all. Also, having devoted all her sympathy to her struggling sisters, she had nothing left except the tiny bits of bitter-

ness and cynicism and sarcasm which up to this time had never formed more than a microscopic portion of her nature. And whenever anybody dared to oppose her cause she let him have them. And to-day—well, you should see her face as I saw it in the coals a moment ago. It is hard to conceive that the sweet face of five years ago could dissolve into anything like that. I don't know how to describe it, but did you ever eat a juicy peach that didn't have a particle of sweetness? Did you ever have all your sweet milk turned to clabber by a flash of lightning?

I could tell you of many other women who have been overtaken by the same catastrophe. I know a woman who has become violently stirred over the temperance movement. She says she is fighting for the wives and children of the drunkards of America. Her soul is consumed with pity for every woman and child who suffers on account of drink. But she went into the fight without fortifying herself with the thought of her kinship with all humanity, and she has become so bitter against the saloon-keeper that her sympathies have been narrowed,

her sense of justice and mercy dwarfed, and much of the sweetness of her nature destroyed. She has patience and mercy for the murderer in his cell, but none for the saloon-keeper, who often needs nothing more than the sympathy and guidance of good men and women to lead him into a better business. She has made herself one-sided simply because she failed to recognize that the Father of the drunkard's wife is the Father of the saloon-keeper, and that she is the sister of both.

Now don't misunderstand me. I don't mean that a woman should not enlist in any cause that requires a fight, nor do I mean that the causes in which these women enlisted were not worthy of a woman's devotion: they were worthy of a woman's devotion. But I do mean to say that no woman can safely allow herself to be absorbed in any cause, however good it may be, if she is so constituted that she cannot fight without endangering her sympathies or her sense of kinship with humanity.

I do not wonder that we have made such slow progress in our efforts to break off the chains with which our fellow men have bound us when

I think how fearfully hampered we are by the chains which we are continually binding about ourselves. A man thinks of the tyranny of—say—the “big interests.” If he could only break the chain the trusts have tied about him he would be a free man. A woman thinks of the tyranny of—say—man-made laws. If she could only break this chain she would be free. But a man binds himself with bonds which are to the chains that others bind about him as ship cables to cotton thread. And so does a woman. A man binds himself with “much business,” or a sordid ambition, or a base appetite, or a destroying passion. A woman binds herself with fashion, society, a morbid craving for martyrdom, the enthralling sex idea and I know not what else.

Perhaps the most distressing of all forms of slavery are those which we bring upon ourselves in frantic efforts to escape from other forms of bondage. A woman finding her will hedged in on every side, in a fit of desperation determines to defy what she is pleased to call the conventions. She thinks she will now be free, but in that act of defiance she meets the fate of the bird who in its frenzy to escape its cage flies

against the bars with a force that breaks its wing and falls to the bottom never to fly again. Another woman seeks emancipation through the divorce court and every night dreams of that happy time when she will be free again. But the door is no sooner opened than she finds her feet entangled in a maze which in all likelihood will hold her to the ground as long as she lives.

The truth is, fighting for freedom always carries with it the peril of a new slavery. Fighting is a perilous business anyway: we must keep our wits about us or we shall lose more than we are trying to gain. The War of American Independence left our country as poor in morals as it was in purse. We reached a high ethical plane before the Civil War and we were at the very bottom again when it ended. The history of America for a score of years after the Civil War is a history of scandal. Public men did things in those days that would not be tolerated for twenty-four hours in our own day. A man must think twice before he fights. And a woman must think several times. For she has more to lose in a fight than a man. A common fisticuff

will disgrace a decent man for a time—the more decent he is the longer the time,—but it will disgrace a woman forever. That is the estimate the world places upon a woman's decency. And even a moral fight for what one believes to be a moral right has its perils: one must keep one's eyes open.

The chief peril lies in the development of unnatural antagonisms. Nothing enslaves a man or woman more completely than an unnatural antagonism. The reason the moral state of the country was so low after the Civil War was because the war developed an unnatural hatred between brothers that destroyed for a time our sense of the brotherhood of man. It is easier to start a war than to stop it and when peace was declared the fratricidal strife went on. It was no longer a fight between the North and South, it was a fight between man and man. Men, rid for a long time of the sense of human brotherhood, pursued their own way to their goal over the prostrate bodies of their fellow men.

The moment a fight begins to develop an unnatural antagonism it is time to get out of it.

A woman *must* get out of it. She has too much at stake. One reason why a woman must be more careful in the matter than men is that with her fighting easily becomes personal and a personal fight of course means an unnatural antagonism. A man may deal with theories and things, but a woman deals with persons. She doesn't care to fight a theory: if she must fight she will fight the people who are back of the theory. She must deal with people. It is hard to make an enthusiastic campaign against intemperance, but it is easy to lead the way in a fight against the saloon-keeper or the saloon-keeper's candidate. And when one is struggling against laws which limit a woman's rights it is so much easier to turn one's guns on the men who made the laws or upon man or men in general.

And this, it seems to me, is the most unnatural of all antagonisms. We all know how completely sex antagonism dehumanizes a man. That eccentric abomination we call a woman-hater is either a monster or a monstrosity. If he is not a brute he is an abortion;—he is never a man. It is just as natural for a man to be

drawn toward woman as it is for him to be born with the usual number of eyes, ears and limbs. I am sure of this because when I meet a woman-hater I have much the same revulsion of feeling that a man has when his small boy insists upon showing him a monstrosity at the side-show. And what is true of a woman-hater is true of a man-hater, only a man-hater is never a monster: she is always a monstrosity. The few women that the world remembers as monsters were not man-haters. You may say that this is too sweeping, for you have known some very sweet women, far from monstrosities, who insisted that they hated men. So have I, but nobody believed them: their sweetness betrayed them. For when a woman becomes enslaved by sex antagonism the first thing she loses is her sweetness. That is what makes sex antagonism so horrible: it destroys a woman's sweetness, which is the very essence of womanliness. It destroys other things also, but one does not need to mention them, for whatever else a woman may have, if she loses the essence of womanliness she is no longer worth while. Sweetness is not all there is of a peach, but the

most luscious looking peach in the world isn't worth having if it isn't sweet. And this is true of everything that God intended to be sweet, including women. There is absolutely no substitute. A woman may speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and if she has not sweetness she is as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

And so in any declaration of independence it is of the utmost importance that a woman should keep this peril in mind and avoid committing herself to any course that might expose her to it. For we have come to an age when for the first time in the history of the world sex antagonism has reached the dimensions of a problem. Every struggle has its own perils and this, it seems to me, is the chief peril of woman's struggle to realize herself. I am not referring to any particular woman's movement. It is the peril of the worldwide struggle of women for a larger share of life either for themselves or others. Just so long as a woman's sympathies and sense of kinship are as wide as humanity, and just so long as she pushes forward in the ranks of humanity conscious that she is a unit

in the universal brotherhood, she can push as hard as she will and she will be safe; but the moment she withdraws from the ranks and starts for her goal as an opposing or separate force she starts on a path that cuts defiantly across the golden rule, and immediately she begins to develop antagonisms that will overbalance all that her goal has in store for her. There is absolutely nothing worth while in store either in this life or in the life to come for a woman whose chosen path narrows her sympathies and whose goal shuts out of her vision the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

XII

OUR CHILDREN AND OURSELVES

I WONDER if anybody in the world is quite as unfair as a parent. We often hear that what our children need most is love, but I know many children who would be glad to get simple justice. We imagine we give them far more than justice. The new baby is not in the house a week before we enthrone him as the center of the universe and cast ourselves and all that we have at his little feet. Before he is six months old we credit him with being a prodigy. We are sure Plato never looked more profound. If he notices a red string he has the taste of a Phidias. If he coos he has the linguistic talent of a Max Müller. But let him have the misfortune to live to the age at which a healthy boy kicks through two pairs of shoes in a week, and he will have his ears pulled for being a dunce, and his mother will be mortified to death because he has no more refinement than a Zulu.

In other words, the less there is of a child the more we think of him, and when he grows big enough to demand all of our thought we think only of what he lacks.

As a matter of fact, a boy in knickerbockers is far more "wonderful" than a cooing baby. Not long ago a little fellow carried his new bicycle over to a neighbor's to show it to a sick playmate. The sick child raised his head from his pillow and his eyes fairly danced over the treasure. "Oh, if I had a bicycle, it—it would make me well!" he said. His little friend looked first at his wheel and then at the pale face, then at his wheel again—a long, lingering look; and then straightening himself up bravely he pushed the wheel over against the bed and said, "Here, you take it!" and turning around ran away as fast as his little legs would take him. And yet we turn boys of this sort out upon the common because we can see in them nothing but a barely possible future.

A poor boy who just happened in the world, nobody knew how, and who had managed somehow to stay on in the little village where he happened until he was big enough to leave it,

tied up his little belongings one day in a bundle and started out to find the world.

The way was long for the pale-faced stump of a child and he grew very tired and faint with hunger. In the heat of the day he spied a watermelon over the fence a short distance from the road. There had never been anybody to make Tom go to Sunday-school, and he never went. He always went as he was bent. And just now his bent was toward the watermelon. He "hooked" it and was caught in the act and carried before the nearest magistrate. It was in a state whose laws expressly prohibit sending a child under seventeen to jail or to the chain-gang or to the penitentiary for a minor offense; but Tom was only a stray boy, and besides, His Honor was a law unto himself, and he gave the pale-face ninety days on the chain-gang. Some days afterwards, the boy, who was now about spent, had a chance to escape, and as it was the first chance he had ever been offered in life so far as he could remember, he accepted it gratefully and left. The officers who went after him with their guns made such a noise that it reached the ear of a reporter, and

the next day the morning paper announced the recapture of the culprit and gave the facts in the case.

A thousand good mothers, more or less, who were spending the summer as far away from home as their means would allow, became absorbed in the home paper that night as usual, and when they had finished reading about Tom they one and all burned with indignation.

“What a shame!” cried everybody in chorus. “If I were only at home I would see that poor boy’s wrongs righted myself, if nobody else would do it.”

And every mother’s son of them devoutly thanked the good Lord that thus far in life *her* boy had had a square deal and a fair chance.

And yet there was not a soul among them all who could have come within a mile of guessing—if you had given her twenty chances—just where her own particular boy was on that particular night. Boy had been left at home with father, because father could not be left alone; and mother had cautioned father in each of her twice-a-week letters to be sure and keep a lookout for him. That was all she knew. The

neighbors knew a little more; only the Eye of Heaven knew the rest.

Every morning during the long hot summer Father ate his breakfast alone and hurried to his office. He would have liked to have Boy breakfast with him, but waking up a boy is troublesome and it was too hot to start the day with trouble. They met at dinner and again at twilight, and then the house was so horribly empty that Father hurriedly ate his supper and went down to the club, while Boy hurriedly ate his supper and went out into the night.

When the summer was over and we were looking over the wreckage, a thoughtful man said:

“I verily believe if you could look into the lives of the young men of this town who have gone wrong within the last ten years you could trace the downfall of three-fourths of them to the first summer they were left at home because Father could not be left alone.”

In due time the scattered nation of resting mothers came home again to resume the burdens of this weary world.

“I hope my son has been a good boy this

summer," said Mother, straining Boy close to the matronly bosom.

"Dunno," said Boy reflectively.

That night when the young folks were in bed Mother repeated her hope to Father.

"But if he hasn't been," she added, "for goodness' sake don't tell me about it: I've enough troubles without looking for more."

We might as well face the bitter truth: the world—or a pretty big slice of it—has no room for Boy. At best it only tolerates him for the man he is going to be, while fervently praying that he may not loiter by the way. At worst it banishes him from the human race and waits with a handful of rocks to see his head appear above the fence. No, this is not the worst. It not merely banishes him: it sends him out with the brand of Cain upon his brow. Give a dog a bad name and you might as well kill him. We have learned the lesson as to dogs and we are careful of the epithets we throw gently at them. And we have learned it as to men and women and girls. We call men, men; we call women, women; we call girls, girls; but we call boys,

Those Bad Boys! The very worst of it all is that Boy himself feels the truth of the gruesome proverb.

“Everybody believes that I am mean: what’s the use?”

Why is it that the world has no room for Boy? Is it because he is so rude? Mother’s pet monkey is rude. Is it because he is so noisy and destructive? Mother’s screaming parrot is far more noisy and a hundred times more destructive. Is it because he is always getting into mischief? It takes a maid’s whole time to keep Mother’s doggie out of mischief. Why has the world no room for Boy?

No doubt there are bad boys in the world just as there are bad men; and I suppose if a census were taken we should find about as many of one as of the other. The main difference seems to be that the average boy conceals his good points, while the average man conceals his bad ones. The other day a little boat capsized in the rapids down the river and presently two men came struggling to the surface and shouted madly for help. A man’s chances for life are not one in ten at that point in the river, and

they knew it. Boy, sitting on a stone wall on the bank, took in the situation at a glance, jumped to the ground, got a rope, plunged in, and in two minutes two lives were saved. There was a crowd on the bank to cheer him as he came ashore; but he blushed, hung his head, and darted for home a mile and a half across the town. He ran every step of the way, and when he got there he didn't mention it. He said afterwards that he didn't think it worth while. If Boy had been a man, three to one he would have stopped to shake hands with the whole crowd, and then hurried off to get his photograph and family history for the afternoon papers.

The world has about reached the conclusion that the heroes of peace are greater than the heroes of war. One day when it has had time to think a little more about it, you will hear it said that the greatest heroes of peace are boys. Boy is essentially a hero. He doesn't know it; he would be ashamed to have you say so; but watch him. In fire or flood, in dire calamity of any sort, give Boy a chance to get beyond the ropes and he will outstrip the relief corps

every time. While men stand around discussing what to do with the poor fellow lying on the walk with a broken head, Boy runs for the water. While father and mother are talking at the supper-table about the pitiful plight of the poor widow in the alley, Boy slips out to carry her a loaf of bread and a turn of wood. He likes to slip out. If he thinks of doing a good deed, he blushes and runs away, for fear somebody should find it out. If by some chance you learn the truth and ask him about it, he will try to throw you off the track by blurting out something unspeakably foolish or shocking. He has an unfathomable horror of the goody-goody. He is in mortal terror lest you should pat him on the head and call him a good boy. He'd die this minute rather than have the other boys call him a "comfort to his mother," though he would die twice for his mother any day.

I have said that Boy is essentially a hero. He is not dependent upon the excitement of the hour. He does not have to wait for the shout of battle. He does not have to have a "large and enthusiastic crowd" present to rouse him to it.

The most heroic deed I can think of at this moment was done by a boy. Perhaps you have heard of it. Two boys were playing in the belfry of one of the college buildings at Oxford. They were standing upon a rafter when something gave way, the rafter turned, and both lost their balance. The older boy caught the rafter as he was falling, while the younger caught the older by his feet; and there they hung. They screamed for help; but not a soul was within hearing. Between their screams the place was as still as death. By and by the older boy said:

“I’ve held on as long as I can; I’ll have to let go.”

“Do you think you could hold on a little longer if I should let loose?” asked the boy at his feet.

“Reckon so.”

“Then good-by; God bless you,” said the little fellow, and loosening his hold he was dashed to pieces on the stone floor a hundred feet below.

Men turn their rough side in; boys turn their rough side out. Men are practiced in the

art of advertising their strong points and concealing their infirmities. A boy never advertises: he hides. The only way to read a boy is to get close to him.

“Oh, those horrid boys! those unspeakable boys!” cried a thin maiden with glassy eyes. But just then those boys were chipping in their Christmas dimes to buy a floral offering to place on the grave of a boy who had been dead three months. And the thin woman with the glassy eyes gathered her shekels together and spent them all for a new-fangled—but let that pass. The question before us is, when are we going to be fair to our boys?

A man is adjudged innocent until he is proven guilty. That is his privilege. A boy is adjudged guilty until he is proven innocent. That is his fate. Give the average boy a square deal and a fair chance along with the average man and I shouldn't wonder if he came out two laps ahead any day.

Not that boys are especially good. No, no. But men are not especially good, either. I am simply pleading for a square deal. We don't play fair with our boys.

I know there are people who go to the opposite extreme. They say boys will be boys, and they shut their eyes and wait quietly for youth to sow its wild oats. But that, too, is unfair. My boy has a right to a fair chance. I have no right to call him a bad boy, but neither have I a right to deny him my daily care, my instruction, my warnings, my companionship. I cannot excuse my neglect of my boy by affirming that a boy must sow his wild oats. A boy does not have to sow his wild oats, but he is likely to sow them if I do not go along with him and show him how to sow good ones.

Look for the good in that boy. There's something better in him, believe me, than "scissors and snails and puppy dogs' tails." Your greatest hero was once locked up inside of a boy.

"But how about our girls?" Oh, well: "sugar and spice and everything nice," of course. But seriously, there is more good in the giddiest of girls than we ever give them credit for. The miracle of the worm transformed into a butterfly is not half so wonderful as the miracle you see when a great burden of responsibility is suddenly placed upon the

shoulders of some light-hearted, thoughtless girl. Let sickness and death come into the home and see what happens to the daughter who has never, until now, given a thought to anything but ribbons and beaux. There is nothing more beautiful than a young girl rising in a spirit of heroism to take the dead mother's place. That unspeakable girl in the next block who seems to have no more reverence than a clown, may have a sleeping heroine deep down in her heart, of whose existence she has never been conscious. Be patient. God may yet put his finger on the heroine and wake her up.

Let us be patient with our girls. Let us be patient with our boys. Let us be patient while we wait upon God to do his perfect work.

Some flowers bloom in a few months; some take a year; one, they say, takes a century. Some bloom in the light, some only in the night. So with our boys and girls. Some blossom out so quick you look upon them wide-eyed with wonder; some are so slow you can hardly see that they are developing at all; and there is one you have worked with and prayed over so long,

it looks like it will take a century. And some are not going to blossom out, may be, until a great darkness comes down upon their lives and brings out the stars. Let us be patient.

XIII

WHEN LOVE IS LOVE

WHEN Jesus came into the world He found pretty much the same ideas about love that many of us have to-day. People said, "We must love those who love us. We must be kind to those who are kind to us. We must stand by our friends. We must do unto others as they do unto us. If they show themselves friendly we must be friendly. If they send us over something nice for dinner we must send them something nice for dinner. We must be neighborly to the neighborly, we must be merciful to the merciful, we must be liberal to the liberal. And if men hate us we will hate them. If they are unmerciful to us we will be unmerciful to them. If they slight us we will slight them. If they don't care to notice us we will turn up our noses when we see them coming and pass by on the other side."

To Jesus all this was horrifying. "Why,"

he said, "that isn't love; that's heathenish. Where is the heathen who would not be kind to those who are kind to him? If a man hates you don't hate him, do him a kindness. If he wishes you harm wish him well. If he treats you badly don't treat him badly—pray for him. If he tries to injure you don't try to injure him in turn: if he smites you on one cheek better let him smite you on the other also rather than smite him back. If he defrauds you of your cloak let him have your coat also rather than defraud him. If a man asks you to lend him anything do it if you can without stopping to ask whether he will do you a favor in return. Show *real* kindness to men. Give them something without expecting something in return. Don't treat men as they treat you, but do unto them as you would have them do unto you. That is *real* love. What you call love is not love—it is simply trading—selfish trading. You show a man a kindness not because you love him but because you want a kindness in return. And you hope to get more than you give. If you want to be the children of God you must seek to be like God. You must do as God does. Sup-

pose God should love only those who love him? Suppose he should treat you as you treat him? Suppose he should be kind only to the kind and merciful only to the merciful? That is not God's way. It could not be his way because he loves. His heart goes out toward every creature he has made. He treats them all with kindness without stopping to ask who has been kind to him. He sends the sunshine and rain upon all alike. He thinks of those who forget him; he speaks tenderly to those who curse him; he loves those who despise him. And if you want to be his children you must do as he does. You must love the unlovely and the unlovable. You must be charitable toward the uncharitable. You must think of something kind to say to the man who says unkind things about you. You must love everybody. You must be liberal toward everybody. You must not think of how they act—that is the heathen way; you must think of how the Father acts. The Father does not limit his love to those who love him. He is kind even to those who do not appreciate his kindness; he is kind even to the wicked who never thank him but only despise

him. Love your enemies as the Father loves his enemies and you shall be his children indeed. Don't limit your mercy to your friends as the world does, but be merciful as your Father is merciful."

But Jesus went further still. He wanted it distinctly understood that the love he was talking about was something entirely different from what some people who take a deep interest in their neighbors often mistake for love. It is something entirely foreign to the spirit which makes us take a deeper interest in our neighbors' faults than in our own. It is not the spirit which sits in judgment upon others.

It is easy to understand why he insisted that we should not yield to the temptation to judge men. There is no love in that sort of thing, for love worketh no ill to one's neighbor, and we know that the judging habit is always working ill to one's neighbor. And it works ill to ourselves. It destroys the spirit of charity and feeds the flame of hate within us; and besides it blinds us more and more to our own faults. Moreover, it is utterly futile, for the reason that we look for faults in others, hoping thereby

to minify or blot out our own. After all, why should we judge others when we have so many faults ourselves? It is notorious that those who are so quick to speak of the motes in other people's eyes have great, blinding beams in their own eyes. It is the fault-finder who is fullest of faults. Why should we be so deeply concerned about other people's motes and so little concerned about our own beams?

But Jesus would not have us go to the other extreme of exaggerated charity, which some superior saints affect. He would not have us so charitable that we would refuse to see the wolf that sometimes comes to us only half hidden in sheep's clothing. He would not have us hide our eyes from the cloven foot when the devil comes to us as an angel of light. He does not ask the good mother to imagine that the vile scab who wants to visit her daughter is every inch a gentleman. He would not have us under obligations to show our charity for show-people of doubtful character by giving them the encouragement of our presence, even if the ticket costs us nothing. He does not move the hearts of fair women to send bouquets and perfumed

notes to condemned murderers. We are not to turn away from our own faults and look for the faults of others, but on the other hand we must not turn away from the fact that if the fruit is not good the tree is corrupt.

What Jesus insisted was that his disciples must be true lovers—true lovers of God and their fellowmen. We owe love to every man. And we cannot pay this debt by merely cherishing a tender feeling for our fellowmen. A mother cannot pay her debt to her child by cherishing tender feelings in her heart for him. Her love must go out to him through her eyes, her lips, her hands. She must love him with her whole being. She must pay him a thousand loving attentions. She must comfort him and make him happy with a thousand loving speeches. So our love for our fellowmen must go out to them in loving attentions. If a man is hungry we must give him bread. If he is dumb we must plead his cause. If he is struggling to overcome a sinful habit we must give him a helping hand.

And we owe love to God. God is love. If that is true we may be sure that he cannot be

satisfied with anything short of love. What you desire of your children above everything else is love. Nothing else will satisfy you. They may do this or that; they may be this or that, but you must have their love. Nothing else can take its place. What God desires of us is our love. We may wear our fingers to the bone working for him; we may give him all honor; we may believe his word; we may speak with the tongues of men and of angels; we may bestow all our goods to feed the poor; we may give our bodies to be burned, but if we do not love him, we will utterly fail to satisfy his heart.

But how can we learn to love him?

I wish we were not always asking this question in a hopeless way, but would really look for an answer. For the answer is not hard to find. One thing is certain: the two commandments—love to God and love to one's neighbor—are one commandment; and if we keep one we must keep the other. If we love God we shall love our fellowmen; conversely, if we really love our fellowmen we shall love God. If then we cannot love one without loving the other, the first thing for you and I to look after if we want

to love God more, is our love for our fellowmen. This indeed is the natural order. We do not begin loving in this world by loving God, but by loving some one else. Watch the birth and growth of love in your baby. He begins not by loving God, but by loving you. You first open up the little heart to yourself, and then you bring before that open heart father, sister and brother. Then you tell him about God until there comes before his little open heart some vision of God, and he begins to love God. How does the baby learn to love mother, sister, brother, God? By *learning* mother, sister, brother, God. The whole secret so far as we are concerned is in the intimate association of the child with mother, sister, and brother, and with the thoughts which bring before him the invisible God. Break up these associations and the baby's love will grow cold; he may even cease to love his absent mother. It is in association that love is formed, and by association that love grows.

So, if you and I have little love for God there are two things which we need to inquire about: first, our love for our fellowmen, and second,

our knowledge of God. One thing in the way of our love for God is our lack of love for some people we know. If we want to love God more we must love one another more. Love is love. We cannot cultivate love for one particular being and keep that love from overflowing upon others. We love all men more for having loved one well. We cannot cultivate a love that will go out toward God only. That love will overflow upon our fellowmen. Even so, we cannot cultivate a love for our fellowmen that will not eventually go out toward God. We ought to learn men more, associate with men more, that we may love them more. Another reason, and perhaps the chief reason, why our love for God is so small is because we make so little effort to learn him. How do I learn to love my fellowmen? By learning about them. In the very same way we must learn to love God. God has given us his Book in which to learn about him. He has given us the place of secret prayer in which we may associate with him and thus learn him. What use do I make of God's Book? Do I search it to find out more about God? Is it my chief ambition to know that I may learn him,

and obey him and be like him? What use do I make of my closet—my meeting place with God? Do I go to it to seek his presence or only to “say” my prayers? Do I cultivate him? Do I value his companionship? If I wanted to love my neighbor more would I not cultivate him? Would I not associate with him more? If I want to love God more shall I stand afar off from God and look to him to perform some strange miracle that will bring my heart up against his own great heart?

“But how can I love one whom I have never seen?” One might as well ask, “How can I love?” for love is something that reaches out after the unseen. To contend that it is impossible to love God because we have not seen him, is to confess our utter ignorance of the nature of love. Love is spiritual and its object is the spiritual. The wife who is afraid that she loves her husband less since he lost an eye, or a hand, or a foot, or all three for that matter, does not love him at all—never loved him at all. We do not see with our physical eyes the real man we love. We see manifestations of him, and we are led to love him through these manifestations,

but when we are actually knit to the real man in him, we can see his body and even his intellect gradually pass away without loving him one whit less. What we see of the man with our eyes or perceive with our intellect we admire, but it is the unseen man that we love. If God had asked us to admire him we might have asked to see him; but he does not ask for our admiration; he asks for our love. It is a foolish thought that we cannot hope to love Christ with all our hearts until we have seen him face to face.

XIV

HE HEALETH THE BROKEN IN HEART

GOD has nowhere promised that his children will be kept from trouble. Yet one is always meeting people who have somehow gotten it into their heads that if they once recognize God as their Father he will be under obligations to shield them from every wind that blows. (As if a father who really loves his children would shield them from every wind that blows!) And so the first time that trouble comes to the average Christian he is tempted to feel that he has not been treated right. Indeed, I doubt whether there are many Christians who have not been conscious at one time of trial or another of a distinct sense of disappointment in the Christian life: things have not turned out as they expected and they don't know what to think. "The strange part about this awful tragedy," said a friend to me one day, "is that this old man who has been so overwhelmed with

trouble in his last days is one of the best men I ever knew; I can't understand it." As if our Lord had ever said, "Come unto me all ye that are afraid of trouble and I will give you an easy time."

God would no more keep us out of trouble than a man would keep his land from being plowed, his vines from being pruned, his trees from being shaken to their roots by the March winds, his son from being laid upon the surgeon's table, if thereby his life might be saved.

No, we shall have trouble. We may have trouble even to the breaking of our hearts. God has nowhere promised that the heart shall not break. He has only promised that it shall not break beyond mending. "He healeth the broken in heart."

We often need to be reminded of this when prostrated by a crushing blow. It is then, if ever, that we feel like reminding God that he has not kept his word. Has he not promised that no trial shall overtake us greater than we can bear? Yes; but he has not promised that no trial shall overtake us, and, as for bearing it, there is time enough to decide about that.

Do you not recall the great sorrow of years ago, when for weeks you carried about with you that horrible sensation of something pulling at your heart-strings—how you felt that your heart was broken, and that you could never survive, because, forsooth, it was broken?

But many a broken heart goes unmended. Some because they do not want to be mended, as some mothers who, when bereft of their children, nurse their sorrow and proclaim that they never want to recover from it. And some because the wrong methods are used. He who depends upon Time to heal a broken heart is putting more on Time's shoulders than they can carry. Time heals many surface wounds, but it mends nothing that is once broken. And he who expects to heal the wound by throwing oneself into a whirlpool of dissipating pleasures will fail, because he does no honor to the Heart-maker thereby.

There is no one so deeply interested in that heart as he who made it for his dwelling place. And there is no one who understands it so well, and who knows so well the treatment it needs. "He healeth the broken in heart and bindeth

up their wounds." And the sooner we can feel this in the midst of our trouble the better. So much of time and of light and of joy is lost because it takes so long to learn where to find a physician. So many of us never go to the Healer of Hearts until we have tried all the quack remedies.

We reach the dregs in our cup of sorrow the moment we imagine that God has forsaken us. Nothing else is half so bitter. On the other hand, the bitterest cup overflows with honey for him who can read around the rim the divinely engraved inscription, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Bolster up our faith as we may, there are times when the strongest of all temptations is to feel that God is no longer with us. And the temptation is only strengthened when we turn from ourselves to see how it has fared with the best of his children. Abraham on the mount with uplifted knife; Jacob, prosperous in young manhood, but in old age bereft of his best beloved sons, and threatened by famine; David fleeing from Jerusalem for fear of Absalom; Daniel, the only man in the realm who prayed three times a day, thrown

to the lions; the Son of God himself crying out in his last agony upon the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!"—these are the scenes which, meeting us at every turn, send us back to our own sorrow with the despairing cry, "Is his mercy clean gone forever? doth his promises fail for evermore?" But God forsakes no man—not even his enemies. All the expressions in the Bible which seem to point that way are simply presentations of the matter from our point of view. When God says, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," he is not talking poetically, though it is most beautiful poetry. He is stating a simple fact, and binding himself in a plain promise. He tells us that he is with us, that where he is he stays, and that whether we see him or not, we may always know where to find him, because he changes not. He cannot leave us. We may leave him. And that is as it usually happens; we run off from him, and accuse him of running off from us. Then when we go back and find him just where we left him, we feel ashamed.

Sorrow is an angel sent from God to do his bidding—if we are willing, and only as we are

willing. When we are suffering we often comfort ourselves with the thought that now God has taken our salvation into his own hands, and is purifying us by pain, in spite of ourselves. "I think surely I will get to heaven," said a tired mother, "for I have had so much trouble." But there is no virtue in trouble. We count the lashes upon our backs and treasure up the drops of blood as so many shekels that will pay our way one day to heaven; but the question of the Father will be not how many strokes were laid upon us, but how many we bore. A mother tries to punish her wayward boy, and he resists her will and spits in her face. She does not think, when she has finally won, that he deserves a stick of candy for letting her whip him. And it is the child of that type who usually asks for the candy, as it is the child of God who usually rebels outrageously in suffering that wants God to give him heaven because he has had so much pain.

Whether our sorrow shall yield sweetness or gall depends not so much upon what is in the sorrow as upon what is in ourselves.

The first thing to do in trouble is to submit.

The first thing a wayward child does when he is punished is to ask what in the world father wants to whip him for. Quiet submission would lessen the force of the blows and give opportunity for the reflection the child needs. It is not of prime importance for the child of God to know all about the nature of his affliction; but it is of prime importance that he should at once submit and place himself entirely in the hands of God. Perfect resignation will enable us to receive every affliction thoughtfully, and will usually enable us to see through our trouble before we get to its end.

The next thing is to be quiet. Noise intensifies pain. He who cries aloud loses his hold upon the rebellious nature within, which must be kept under at any cost. One should not talk to every one about his trouble. That only fans the flame of discontent. Nor should one be forever on the lookout for somebody to sympathize with him. People who do that soon forget the only One who can be truly touched with a sense of our infirmities. Nor should one ask everybody around why the Lord should let him suffer so much.

It is easy to mark every step a sufferer takes toward heaven. As we grow in grace we endure more gracefully. We become less noisy. The severest pain of which I have ever known or heard, failed to drive the smile from the face of a saintly woman who endured in silence, and between the paroxysms spoke only of the love of Jesus.

Finally, pain is purifying when it inspires prayer and a love for the Word of God. The sorrow that turns us away from the Book will never make us saintly. A whispered prayer of submission—not boisterous begging, but the quiet pleading of a divine promise—is the only medicine I have known that could quiet the most intense pain without in a measure destroying the consciousness of the sufferer.

XV

INASMUCH AS YE DID IT UNTO ONE OF THESE

I HAVE been sitting here before my fire in the twilight thinking of the most amazing story that Jesus ever told. I mean his story of the great day of final sifting when every man will be sent to his own place. In that day, according to this story, there will be but one question asked. All that the judge will want to know will be whether we have truly loved. And in getting at the facts he will not employ the usual methods. He will not look into these things on which you and I have counted so much. He will not lay stress on what we have regarded as the great things of life. He will look into our everyday lives for the little deeds of kindness and the little acts of compassion which more than anything else *prove* our love. And it will be very surprising, for nobody keeps account of the things he does for love's sake, and one who is full of love for Christ does such things so natu-

rally that he is not conscious that he is doing anything worth mentioning or indeed that he is doing anything for Christ at all. "Come, my Father's blessed ones," he will say——

By the way, did ever a mortal receive such a welcome? Sometimes when we think of heaven—though it seems as if people seldom think of heaven nowadays—we say that we shall be glad if God will have mercy on us and not shut the door in our faces, but will let us just slip in quietly, for we don't feel that we have a right there anyway. And here we have a picture of the Son of God calling those who come to the door his Father's own blessed ones, and inviting them into their home which they have inherited—which the Father prepared for them a long while ago and has kept in readiness for them all these years. Let us not be afraid. The blessedness awaiting God's children is an inheritance prepared for us.

But I have wandered. "Come, my Father's blessed ones," he will say, "come and receive the inheritance that the Father has prepared for you. For I know your life. I recall how you fed me when I was hungry and received me

when I came to you a stranger, and how you visited me when I was sick and in prison." And you will be utterly astonished. Why, all your life you had longed to do something for Christ and you had never found an opportunity; and all you could do was to help a few people who needed help. But Jesus, reading your thoughts will say: "That is all right; the opportunity came when one of my little ones came to you for help and you helped him. Inasmuch as you helped him, you helped me." Think of it! We can do great things for Christ simply by doing little things for our fellowmen.

A very rich man did you a great favor the other day, and yesterday you were wondering what you could do to show your gratitude for his kindness. "What can I do for a millionaire?" you said to yourself. Certainly you could not give him anything that he would want. He had no need that you could supply. What could you do? But while you were thinking there was a cry in the street, and you ran to the door to find the rich man's son lying upon the pavement, with his arm broken by a fall from his wheel, and a runaway horse bearing

down directly upon him. To-day you received a letter from the rich man. "You have done me a greater kindness than I can ever hope to repay," it said, and you stopped and said, "Surely there is some mistake." And then you read on. "You saved my son's life yesterday." And then it came to you as a delightful surprise that the kindness you had shown the little fellow was a kindness shown to his father. So, if our lives are full of kindnesses shown our fellowmen there will be many delightful surprises in the Judgment, for we shall find them all put down as kindnesses shown to our Lord.

But there will be other surprises. There will be some on the left who have always set great store by their liberality and devotion. They have fasted twice a week and given tithes of all they possessed. They have endowed churches and colleges and orphanages, and some have given to the poor and some have paid their honest debts and some have spent their lives in teaching men the mysteries of the Word of God. But the Judge, looking into their hearts, will say: "Depart from me; for inasmuch as

ye did it not for their sakes but for your own gain or glory, ye did it not unto me.”

Many a man (and many a woman) has fed the hungry and received the stranger and clothed the naked and visited the sick and the prisoner, and carefully set all these things down to his credit with the idea that they would entitle him to a place at the right hand in the Judgment. But the good deeds that are done to be credited to one's account in heaven are not the good deeds of this story. The deeds which are here recorded have not been set down at all. They were not done with an eye to reward; they were done for love's sake and therefore no account was kept of them. Who ever heard of keeping an account of deeds done for love's sake? If these men had set down these deeds to their credit they would have come into the presence of God puffed with pride, and when their deeds were called out they would have struck the attitude of a Pharisee who is about to pray or give alms at the street-crossing. But when we do a thing for love's sake we never think we have done anything worth mentioning or remembering, and when these men and

women heard their good deeds called out they were astonished. They thought there must be some mistake. They were not aware that their lives in God's service had been very fruitful or very beautiful. They had often mourned their unprofitableness. How often they had wished for an opportunity to do some great thing for God, and how often they had repented for failing to make the most of the opportunities God had given them! Many of these men and women had lived in a very narrow, obscure place. They were plain, humble people of the everyday sort with no talent for anything that they could discover. They could not preach; they could not carry on missionary enterprises; they could not build memorial churches. They could not even stammer out a helpful word in prayer-meeting. How could they be of any service to God? All their lives they had longed for an opportunity to do some great thing for God, and the opportunity, so far as they could see, never came. But while they were longing they followed the promptings of their hearts, and as their hearts were full of love for Christ they were led to look after his little ones. They

did not do it with an eye to future gain. They did it for love's sake. They loved Christ and their fellowmen, and with this love in their hearts they were drawn as by a magnet to those who were in distress. It did not occur to them at the time that it meant anything much—surely not as much as a sermon or a prayer-meeting talk or a large subscription to a memorial church. What must have been their astonishment when standing before the judgment seat they heard not a word concerning any of those religious acts which they were accustomed to hold in such high regard when they lived, while much was made of the little deeds of kindness which they had hardly thought worth counting!

How close it all comes to our hearts! How it glorifies the common, everyday duties of life! We do not need to have great opportunities or great talents to do great things for God. We only need to have a heart full of love for Christ and follow its promptings.

If I love a man I will not kick his dog. Even if I don't like dogs I will convince myself that his dog is unusually likable for a dog. In other words, if I love a man my love will overflow

on all that is his. My love will show itself not only in my conduct toward him but in my conduct toward all that is dear to him. I will pat his little boy on the head. I will smile at his baby. I will notice in passing how beautifully the flowers are growing in his garden. I know perfectly well that there is not a man in the world who will believe that I love him if I kick his dog or his boy and send him howling home, or if I find his children hungry and refuse to feed them; or if I find them thirsty and refuse to give them drink. And you know just as well that there isn't a man living who could convince you that he loved you if he were unkind to those you love.

Why should we deceive ourselves? Why should we persuade ourselves that we love God if we are not kind to his children? How can we imagine that he will take our professions of love seriously if we let his hungry children go unfed, if we forget his children who are sick or in prison? We must not neglect to tell God of our love, to praise his name, to stand up for his cause, but we must remember that our love

for him amounts to little if it does not overflow upon those who are dear to him.

What a glorious thought it is that God takes the kindnesses we show his children as kindnesses shown himself! If that means anything it means that God has a parental heart, for that is what every father and every mother does. If a man shows your child a kindness you accept it as a kindness shown to yourself. You value it even more than a kindness shown directly to yourself, for you feel that it is a double kindness—a kindness shown both to your son and to you. We must remember this in all our dealings with our fellowmen. It will make the day brighter. It will make kind deeds easier and pleasanter. You delight in doing a favor for Mary Smith because her mother—now in heaven—was your best friend. It is a joy to show a kindness to those Jones girls because their mother—well, you can never forget her kindness to you when you were ill. How delightfully the day would pass if all the people you met were sons and daughters of Edith Smith or Margaret Jones! But the day would pass more delightfully still if you should love God

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with all your heart and could remember that all the people you meet are the sons and daughters of God. Isn't this the secret of the highest social happiness—to feel always that the men and women we meet are the sons and daughters of the best Friend we ever had and still have?

XVI

OVER THE EMPTY CRADLE

THERE are no faces in the coals to-day. But a vision came to me a moment ago of a bowed figure whose face I am glad I did not see. It was the figure of a man I saw years ago sitting alone by a little coffin that rested on a backless bench in a rude little meeting-house in the mountains. A little bunch of red and pink roses tied with a bit of blue ribbon lay on the coffin lid, and there was a little knot of curious, cold-blooded folk gazing now at the coffin, and now at the figure of the young man who leaned over it with his face buried in his hands trying to stifle the sobs which convulsed his manly frame. He was not one of them—you could see it at a glance—and no heart went forth toward him because he had committed the unpardonable sin of being better than themselves.

This was all that I saw, but I remembered

having heard at the time that there was a young heart-broken wife lying hopelessly sick at home trying to nurse a sick baby, while her only earthly comforter had gone off with her firstborn to put it out of her sight forever. No, not forever, for within a week she too would go. And I remembered also that the young man himself was ill and threatened with the loss of his vision. And they were poor. And they were God's children.

I have been thinking how that scene tried my faith. It would have tried yours if you had been there. Not until I had left the little meeting-house far behind me could I understand the words of comfort which my poor lips tried in vain to utter. Nor do I understand them well now. But I have learned this much: when I have prayed for light and do not see it, I do not forget that God sees it and that it is enough for me to know that there is light. We cannot see God through our tears; or if we do it is like the reflection of the sun in troubled waters. I should not judge my Master by the distorted view I get of him through my tears any more than I would judge my mother

by the glimpse I have had of her face in a spoilt mirror.

I wish we could remember that this simple fact—that the first burst of grief is always blinding—fixed in the mind at the beginning of one's hour of darkness is worth more than all the help of those who were "born to solace and to soothe." The tears which cleanse our vision first obscure it. This is as true of our intellectual and moral vision as it is of our physical eyesight. When the heart is overwhelmed all our views are distorted. Men appear as trees walking. The look of pity in the face of God is mistaken for a frown; the rod we would kiss appears as a cruel sword dripping with blood. If we would only remember this! If we would only—when our hour of trial comes—go off to some quiet spot and whisper over and over again to our hearts: "This sorrow has blinded me; things are not what they seem; in my present condition I cannot afford to trust my eyes, my judgment, my feelings. I cannot afford to judge God by what I see of him through my tears; I am in no condition to answer these questions which

knock so loudly at my heart; I must wait; there is a whole eternity in which to find out the truth about God's dealings with me." It is because we forget—it is because we cry out before we can understand what has happened—that we fall into so many mistakes which can only add sorrow to sorrow, and afterwards overwhelm us with humiliation. "I cannot think of God as anything but harsh and cruel," said a mother to me one day; "why does he not explain his conduct to me?" I replied: "If your little daughter came to you complaining of your harshness and cruelty and demanded to know the reason for your conduct, would you trouble yourself to explain? Would you not wait until she was in a mood to understand and accept an explanation? And if she changed her attitude and begged forgiveness for her harshness would you not quickly take her in your lap and tell her all?"

How often we delay our healing by continuing in such an attitude before God that he cannot tell us anything. It was poor Job's trouble. He talked and talked; and his friends talked; but he got no relief. Then God rebuked him

for darkening counsel "by words without knowledge," and he saw his mistake, confessed that he did not know what he was talking about, and "abhorred himself in dust and ashes." "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job." So long as grief keeps our eyes closed there is nothing for us to do but to keep our mouths closed. David understood this, and said: "I was dumb; I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it."

When the blinding tears have done their work, the lips may open with safety, for they will open with praise. It is hard to believe it now—in the midst of darkness that can be felt. But think a moment. Five years ago your first-born went home. You felt then as you feel now; you felt that you could never think of the little one again without the horrible sensation of something gnawing at your heart. But five long, lonely years have passed and with them the clouds: the sun shines out now, and although you may look up into the clear azure still watching for the glimpse of a baby face, the sweetest, happiest, blesseddest thought of your life—the thought which strengthens you

when all others fail—is that you have one precious cherub safe at home. You would not have her back in this cold world for all the universe. You would not have her return to you, for you are preparing to go to her. And so it will be with the present sorrow if you will but look up. Let the tears fall if they will, but look up. Solace is for those who seek it. We may extract sweetness out of woe if we will, but if we let it alone it will yield only gall.

There is never a sorrow so bitter but we seek to add to it. It is easy to fall in love with misery. Many a broken heart is never healed because the broken-hearted one does not want to be healed. Torn from her child, the mother's first impulse is to bind her soul to grief. She seeks to keep her heart bleeding by thinking of what she might have done, and blaming herself for the little son's sickness and death. Or she probes her heart to find out whether she is rebelling against God. It is wise to examine ourselves, but when the heart is quivering with pain God would not have us probe it. If the heart is to be healed we must let it alone and allow the Physician to look after it. Be a

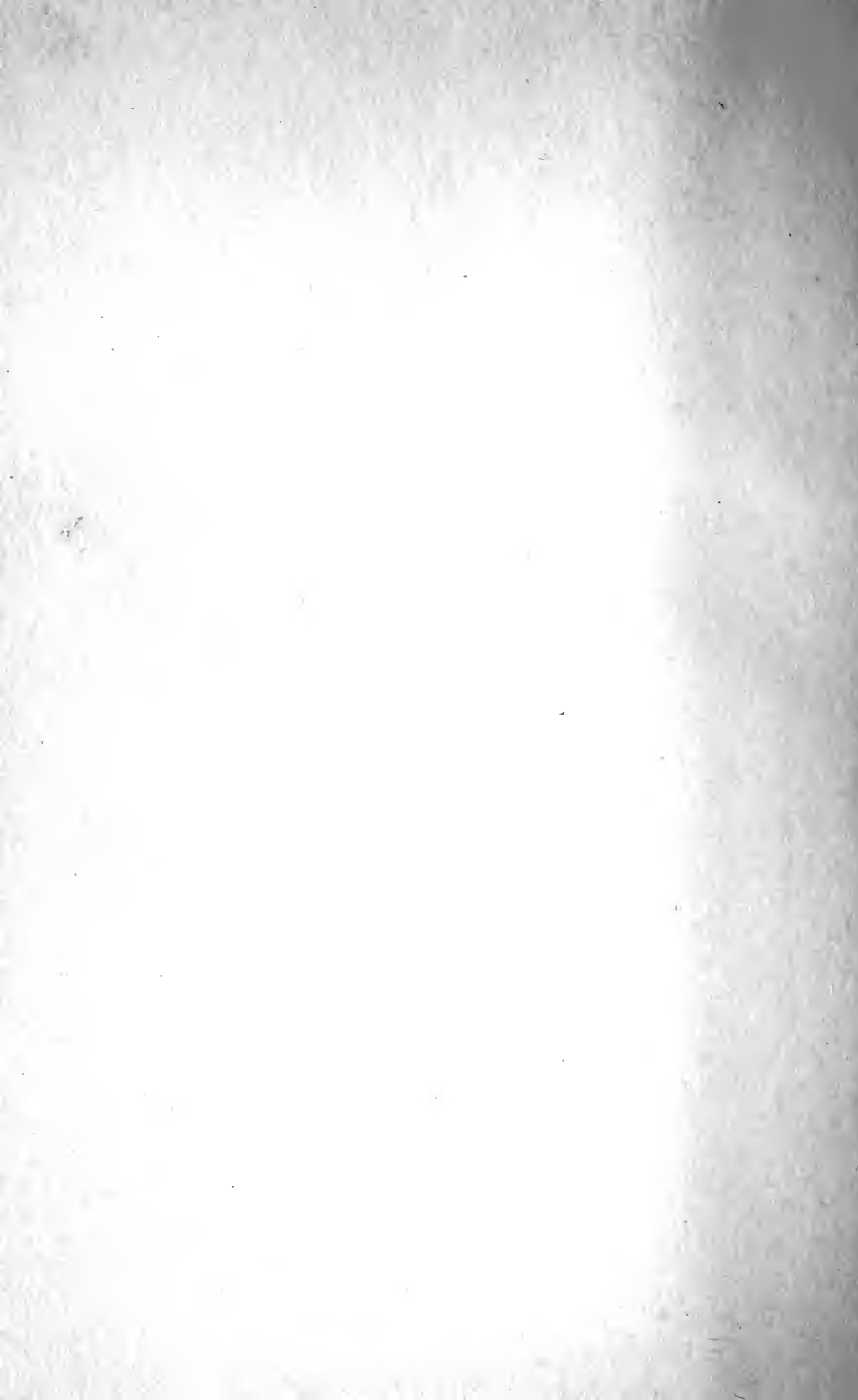
good patient; put yourself in the hands of your Physician and think of him. If you cannot think of him, do the next best thing: think of your glorified child. Not your suffering child, but your glorified child. Put yourself in her place. While she was with you your one thought was her happiness; you gave your life for her; you were wholly unselfish, self-sacrificing. Why should you descend from this high estate and give yourself to selfish thoughts? Why should you think of your own sorrow when you can think of her joy? You prayed that she might be happy; it was hard to pray for anything else: now that God has answered your prayer, will you complain because the answer was so different from your expectations? In praying for her happiness did you intend only to pray for your own happiness?

Put yourself in her place. You torture your heart continually with the thought of what she suffered: you cannot help feeling that God was cruel to allow it; that he was cruel not to allow her to remain here with you. Does she now torture her heart with the thought of what

she suffered? Does she care? Looking up into his face, does she think that he is cruel? Put yourself in her place. How often, when you held the precious burden in your lap and pressed the little hand to your lips and counted its dimples—how often the mists came over you when you thought what those little hands would have to do! How often your heart ached at the thought of the hard, stony paths those little pink feet would have to tread! “Oh, the world is too hard and cold for my babe!” you said over and over again. Can you be angry with God that he should agree with you? Is she angry? Put yourself in her place. With all your wealth of love, did you ever feel that your care would be sufficient for her? Did you ever feel satisfied that you were doing all that ought to be done? Did you not feel that you were not equal to the responsibility placed upon you? Did you not feel that with all your love and care you could not shield her as you would like from the hardships of life? But now she is in the hands of One who can do the best and who will do the best because his love exceeds even a mother’s love. If we know anything at

all about Jesus, we know that his heart overflowed with a tender and gracious affection for children. It was natural that his pure soul should go forth toward those whose lives illustrated the virtues he so highly prized. In a world darkened by sin they were his most congenial companions. They refreshed his spirit. And he took them in his arms and laid his hands upon them and blessed them. Surely you can never forget that. Can you not give thanks to God that the tender Shepherd who took the little ones in his arms nearly nineteen hundred years ago is the same Jesus into whose hands you committed the spirit of your own child when she was called up higher?





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